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WHY STOP LEARNING?

BY DOROTHY CANFIELD

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ROUGH-HEWN

RAW MATERIAL

THE HOME-MAKER

MADE-TO-ORDER STORIES

HER SON'S WIFE

WHY STOP LEARNING?

WHY STOP LEARNING?

by

DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER



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From *Creative Freedom*

Confucius, who had a profound sense of creative values, which China's love of formalism has misinterpreted, was asked by his disciples during a visit to a crowded city, what should be done for the city's population. Confucius replied:

"Enrich them."

Asked what should be done next, Confucius answered:

"Then educate them."

Quoted by Ku Hung-Ming in lecture at Mainichi Auditorium, Osaka, Japan. Toky Nichi Nichi English edition, November 6, 1924.

FOREWORD

WHEN I was younger there were more hours in the day than now, I had ungrudged leisure for aimless wanderings both in books and country paths, and I had no interest in sign-posts or forewords. But now that I am in the thick of the busy, matter-of-fact period of so-called purposeful middle-age, I have a middle-aged preference for knowing something about the intentions of a path or a book before I give my (probably overvalued) time to it. As this book is intended more or less for people in about my period of life, I am taking for granted on their part a similar cautious dislike for uncertainties and begin by telling them what the book is about.

In the first place why did I write it? Because like everybody else of my age who is interested (either pro or con) in democracy's survival, I always have in the back of my mind the problem of educating everybody. My mental door on this subject was ajar, as it is in most American minds. This door was pushed wide open by the appearance recently in various books and periodicals of a mass of new information about attempts at education among grown-ups. Specialists and experts have been collecting the facts about the situation and through various channels have been trying to tell us about them. Some of these facts were new to me; all of them looked different because I saw

them in a new light. I found them very stimulating to the imagination, and through them caught glimpses of possibilities, familiar enough apparently to specialists but which most of us know only through a new set of vague catch-words.

I have not in the least attempted to make a complete or detailed statement about the facts. These have been sought out by the responsible professional investigators of the Carnegie Corporation and many others and are now set down in printed books at every one's disposal. This book is a running commentary on those facts, and on others familiar to us all rather than a restatement of them. It describes the reaction to them of a fairly typical American citizen who is no specialist.

I found myself (as I think most Americans would be, presented with those facts) stirred, troubled, anxious, hopeful. What was the meaning of these new activities? And these other familiar old ones . . . before my eyes they seemed to be rearranging themselves in a new sequence which leads . . . where does it lead?

Nobody knows where any idea is leading a nation. This book contains my guess, set down with enough of the facts to be an invitation to every reader to make his own guess, quite as good as mine, about a matter of importance to us, of almost life-and-death importance to our children.

The United States of America have now spent about a century in the effort to make literate every single person in a large country. Such an attempt, even the idea of such an attempt, was new in the history of the

world a hundred years ago. To say that any idea whatever is new in the history of the world sounds like a monstrous statement. But isn't this one literally true?

Well, we have done it, or near enough to call it done. But as we reach that longed-for goal, we perceive that we have not in the least arrived at our destination, namely an educated citizenry. We now see that "making the masses literate" does not at all mean "educating the people." We have only succeeded in forcing upon most of the young of our race the tools by which modern education may be obtained.

We now see opening before us a whole new conception of what education is, what mass education must be; daunting, discouraging, difficult . . . infinitely inspiring to courageous souls.

That is what this book is about.

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WHY STOP LEARNING?

SOMETHING ABOUT THE IDEA OF MASS EDUCATION

I

FOR a long time after August 1914 we insisted that there could be no more connection between our progressive modern lives and the nightmare of the war, than as if a cyclone had struck us. It is now quite plain that what the Great War yelled in our ears was a brutal and much-needed rebuke to our self-satisfaction. "You think you've done something, don't you? Are well on your way? Yah! You haven't begun. You're only thinking about beginning."

Every post-war thought and plan is set to the tune of that rough warning. Its sardonic bitterness has killed off many tender souls; but it has aroused tougher and more realistic natures. Democracy has wiped from its face the fatuous smile of certainty, and begins to see that its best minds, not merely the well-intentioned, should be in charge of its foundations and defenses.

The foundations of any democracy are of course its people; and its only defense is the training given to the hearts and brains and bodies of its people. No wonder that friends of democracy are appalled by what they see as they look at the facts about that training as set out baldly in the unsparing light cast by the War.

Democracy can last on just one condition:—that

it solve a problem compared to which the riddle of the Sphinx looks like a sum in first-grade arithmetic, the problem of getting everybody in the democracy educated. It is a pretty good guess that if the founders of our American democracy had had any notion that they were steering their posterity up to any such unanswerable riddle, they would have withheld their hands in terror. But they did not. And we are in for it. If everybody can't learn to swim at least passably, we will all sink. That is the sort of country founded for us by our revered elders. We may like it or we may lump it. It remains the country we have to live in.

Some of the most imaginative among those early launchers of the thunderbolt did see along the road ahead of them far enough to make a guess that everybody in the country would have to be taught how to read and write and do sums. Do not let us imagine that most people of that period accepted this idea, which seems to us now of the blandest mildness. For a long time after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, for more than a generation after it, the idea of universal literacy made little headway outside of New England. The idea became a reality according to the usual formula:—first, a small minority of advanced radicals talked loudly about the right of every child to an elementary education, even children of parents who worked with their hands. Little attention was paid to such talk by people in general, absorbed in mating and making a living, the permanent instincts of mankind. The majority of the possessing class saw no harm in such ideas because they were

too foolishly impractical to be dangerous. Not to speak of the folly of the theory, where under the sun would the money come from to put it into practice? Would substantial property owners ever vote taxes on themselves for any such nonsense as educating the children of the riff-raff? Not very likely. So the theorists were allowed to broadcast their seed, and after due time the new crop of ideas began to spring up.

During the life-time of perhaps another generation, thirty years or so, there was the usual flurry of black bad feeling, at the usual period in the life of a new conception when it stops being a harmless notion and begins to become a stubbornly living element in daily existence. The possessing class, though smaller in early America than elsewhere, ran true to their traditions; went through their time-honored spasms of crying out that they were being stabbed in the back by the mob; put up their usual back-to-the-wall fight against an accomplished fact, under their usual impression that it was still an idea.

We are brought up to think, aren't we, at least by inference, that our public-school system has always been with us, has always had its present accepted support from our taxes? Nothing of the sort. There are in American magazines and newspapers from 1815 to 1830 plenty of horrified outcries over the revolutionary, poisonous idea of teaching all children to read and write, even the children of parents who had no money to pay tuition fees. These protests were based on an idea which has always tried its best to prevent mass education, the idea that the purpose of getting

an education is to get into a class which does not work; and the equally old fear that (since work must be done), if everybody is allowed to get an education, possibly everybody, *even the educated*, will have to work.

But, of course, such protests did not state their real basis, perhaps did not know what it really was, any more than they do now. They based themselves on the assumption (reappearing today in a slightly altered form in books on racial superiority) that the very fact of ignorance in a family proved that education would be impossible for them, because if they had been capable of acquiring education they would have had it by this time. "Slum people make the slums" is a more modern statement of this excuse for apathy on the part of fortunate folk. It was assumed, as an axiom plain to the mind of any person with ordinary sense, that the children of parents who did not have enough money to pay tuition fees were thereby in the nature of things, shown incapable of profiting by an acquaintance with the multiplication table.

Old Guards are usually excellent fighters, and the Old Guard of that period fought with their traditional courage, refusing to listen to reason with all their traditional dislike of that element in human discussions. But there fell upon them the fate which makes an end to all Old Guards:—one by one they died and were buried. And over their graves the world, struggling to make some sense out of its destiny, trod heavily forward in its fumbling search for the right road.

II

There are many dangers threatening the life of a new idea, and opposition is by no means the worse of them. In fact, opposition often acts as the fulcrum to a lever. With the disappearance of objections to free, elementary public schools, the attempt to give an education to everybody slid smoothly into another phase which has lasted into the present,—a fog of universal over-estimation of elementary schools which is perhaps more dangerous to education than hostility. In our thick smother of patriotic, complacent pride that all children are being taught to read and write, the idea of everybody's being educated runs far more risk of dying than it ever did from the curses of conservative old gentlemen in white waistcoats whose real fear was that there would be no more domestic servants if the alphabet became too familiar.

The whole idea of an educated citizenry, never very clear or strong in anybody's mind, was being stifled to death by satisfaction over reading and writing, when the War clanged its warning into our cotton-stuffed ears. Startled from our smugness, we have since been looking in a new, cold but very clear light, at facts which before were wrapped in a golden haze. The elementary school system is just as good as before the war. Probably better. But it is not nearly as good as we thought it; above all not nearly so important in the whole scheme of things. To have put over in one short century the new idea of universal literacy in a huge country is in truth an astounding feat. But there

are far more astounding feats which our democracy must achieve, or sign its own death sentence. It is madness to stop to admire ourselves, as we have done during a good many years of fluent Commencement Day oratory, for having laid the corner stone of an edifice yet to be built. "The people" have been taught for the first time in history to peruse the printed page; and, good heavens! look at the printed pages they pick out to peruse. We are merely a literate nation, not at all an educated one.

With hardly an exception, the national attempt towards education has concentrated itself upon the minds of our youth. And yet everybody knows that the only material which can be shaped by real education is a grown-up personality. All that can be done with youth is to get it started on the road towards self-education, with the right tools in its hands and the right habits in its head (and this is quite hard enough an undertaking!). We have been making as false pretenses as any thimble-rigger, in giving young people and their parents to understand that they can "get an education" in our schools,—in any schools. Schools, even the best schools, can only give them schooling. Education must be mixed and seasoned with life-experience, which is the one element no school can give and no young person can have.

Perhaps the most useful result of the new and not otherwise very valuable talk about voluntary education of which this book is a part is to make this necessity for continuing education reasonably clear to ordinary thoughtful citizens—even to professional educators. It

had certainly been pretty well lost sight of, in the nervous tension of the fight for public schools. That had lasted long enough for us to forget (what we never understood very clearly) that schooling for children is of little value if the children on growing up do not use their schooling to get themselves an education.

III

During this period of concentration on schooling for the young, there have been two classes of American grown-ups, who for reasons of their own, have with very little help or attention from professional teachers, kept alive the ideal of the only possible real education, self-education; who have been pricked out of our natural human apathy by the priceless human instinct for growth. One of these classes has been minutely small in number, and the other sprawlingly large. The minutely small class has come from those who have had the most schooling. The immensely large from those who have had the least.

One of the newest reproaches we are flinging at our colleges and universities is that they seem, if the pudding is at all proved by the eating, to knock on the head all intellectual curiosity, so that Commencement Day is hailed with a whoop of joy as the date on which the process of learning can come to a dead and an eternal halt. Our college graduates, we begin to complain, use their diplomas as weapons with which to defend themselves against the assaults of more education. They *have* their education, they shout ex-

ultantly as they race away from their classes into their offices and out on the golf-courses; that bother is done with, and they can with light hearts devote the rest of their lives to making money and enjoying themselves. On the last day of the academic year all over our country in colleges and high-schools, orators are solemnly explaining to young people that the day which ends their schooling is called "Commencement Day" because it is the day on which they stop being educated and commence real life. And the young people before them, deadly weary of their schooling, nod their heads in heart-felt agreement with this watertight partition between education and real life. First one and then the other, with no mixing! That's what they have been taught, by their schooling, and that is the principle on which most of them act. Wherever else among the American people there may have been signs of a desire to go on with education in mature life, it has not been among the majority of college graduates. Education for other people, yes. As for them, they had it already.

We Americans are beginning one of our scolding campaigns at the colleges for this result of their training, and, as usual, to think it is due to some particularly American quality in our national character or in our colleges or universities. But the only people who scold at America for having produced Main Street are people who have not read or have not understood "Madame Bovary" and do not realize what France can do in that line. Complacency over little is no American monopoly. There is no country existing which does not

allow pharisaical self-satisfaction over a small amount of education to slam the door in the face of cultural and intellectual advance. The small child who painfully spelled out "C-A-T" and leaned back to exclaim proudly, "Gracious, how much I know," is to be encountered elsewhere in the world than among our American college graduates. Perhaps the funniest (or the saddest) of all these people are the ones who, having a little more education, ought to know better. The well-known straw-woman, dear to the hearts of scorners, who thinks that a winter's "course of lectures" on Italian art entitles her to have valid ideas on Michael Angelo, is really less comic (or less tragic) than the Oxford graduate who authentically said of a proposition to publish a British edition of an imaginative new treatment of the Greek myths, "Oh, that wouldn't do at all over here. It might go in America where they are still educating themselves." The amusing inference in his mind that English University men have no need to go on educating themselves, is as crudely and rawly the result of half-education as the grotesque ideas of the poor lady about Michael Angelo are quarter-educated. Such an inference wherever it is found seems to kill the impulse toward living self-education more effectively than downright ignorance. It is one of the most formidable though least recognized enemies of culture and it seems to be a potential danger of all schooling save the best and finest.

Everywhere in all countries in all its varying aspects, it has the same effect of producing a grotesque over-valuation of the tiny amount of culture and learning

already acquired, and a self-protecting Prussian disdain for everything else. The traditional figure of fun of the uneducated lecture-haunting American middle-class woman is but slightly more lamentable than the traditional "cultivated" European bourgeois who has had forced upon him in his youth a certain fixed body of information about the facts of literary and artistic affairs. This lifeless culture rarely grows with him as he grows. He hangs it about his neck as a personal ornament, as the jungle Negro hangs his patent-leather shoes; he uses it as the collection of passwords which are necessary for his admittance to the lodge of his social circle; and his intellectual curiosity has been as smothered by complacency over his quaintly limited achievements as that of our American college graduates by a diploma, or of an attendant on a Chautauqua course by the end of the summer's lectures. He knows the names of more artists and musicians and historical events than the incoherently lecture-instructed American woman, and when those names are mentioned in conversation, he knows more of what is the proper thing to say about them; but they form no more an enriching, purifying, deepening part of his inner life, than of hers. The difference between the two varieties of naïve pretentiousness is one of degree rather than of quality. Both are solidly smeared with a coating of complacency which is the only impervious protection against education.

IV

Main

Now there are, in all nations, two classes of human beings who for very different reasons, are free from the curse of complacency, and who have that humility of mind which is the strait and narrow (and only!) gate to intellectual life. Note that I do not say to artistically creative life. One of these classes is composed of highly intelligent people who are truly educated and hence realize that they know very little and that their effort must be incessant if they are ever to do anything worth while with their brains. "The Education of Henry Adams" was written by one of these rare birds. In the nature of things, when such an unusual nature has received (and survived, which many do not) a college or university education, the process of self-education is much easier for him than for an equally rare nature who has had no instruction about the use of the tools of culture. Any one who has floundered helplessly in trying to learn a new sport, and who, after only a few lessons from a good coach, has seen light stream in on difficult points, knows how disheartening it is to try to learn anything without some instruction from specialists. For instance, without seeing good tennis players, or being informed of the fact by somebody who knows it, who would guess at the elementary basic necessity to turn one's body sidewise to the net? It is only to be expected that most of our few thoroughly educated American men and women have been formally instructed people who for

some reason were moved to use their instruction as a tool for their mature purpose.

These few at one end of the scale, numerically almost invisible; and at the other a large number of plain people protected by genuine ignorance from complacency, make up the two classes of Americans who, during the long struggle to achieve schools, have kept flickeringly alive the ideal of universal education.

As we pause to look back we see that all through the nineteenth century and increasingly in this first quarter of the twentieth, these two dissimilar groups have created, the first out of their intelligence, the second out of their humility, a movement towards education for grown-ups. The American spot-light has been turned with a white concentration on public schools. In the semi-darkness, all around the schools, grown-ups have been groping for education. Now, as the spot-light shifts a little, we are astonished to see so many of these groping, scattered efforts flash into sight, and to notice that they seem to be parts of one new whole, and that a tremendously big whole.

But I am making myself ridiculous when I speak of the movement for adult education as a new whole. What I mean, of course, is that it is new to me. (I say "to me" in order to sound modest. As a matter of fact I don't believe that most Americans have thought any more about it than I have.) The movement has been a long time on the way, even though to our dulled eyes it may only now be coming into visibility. Any one who considers for a moment the signs of the times, knows that the next battle in the campaign of democracy is

going to rage around the question of the possibility and advisability of general education for the majority of grown-ups, just as the battle of the last century has been about the possibility and advisability of general schooling for all the young. Nobody needs to be a prophet to foresee this.

v

This new battle will take probably a good deal more than a century either to fail or to succeed. As we draw breath before the firing really begins, we see a lining-up of forces that looks very familiar. Why wouldn't we? There are always about the same variety of personalities in each human generation, who always instinctively take the same sides in the everlasting battles of opinion. We distinguish very clearly the descendants of the choleric old gentlemen in white waistcoats who died in the trenches defending the alphabet against the degrading contact of the working-classes. Their grandsons waste no time in fearing the extinction of the servant class, that class just as their ancestors gloomily feared having disappeared with the rise of general instruction. Instead of the hearty, early-Victorian damn-the-working-classes manner, they wear self-consciously the early twentieth-century damn-the-Rotarians air. They are convinced of the hopeless inferiority to them of the great mass of their fellow-citizens, and they rise resentfully against any attempts to alleviate this inferiority. They do not like universal literacy any more than those earlier Tories did, and

they delight in pointing out the horrors resulting from mere literacy, and in trying to persuade the world that illiteracy (for all save their own circle) would have been better. They have accepted it, true; for the same reason that the French aristocracy has ended by accepting the Third Republic. But in a natural instinct of self-protection they are massing themselves solidly against any attempt to go farther. They feel the same intimate distaste for the idea of education open to every one which their grandfathers felt for the idea of the alphabet open to every one. They feel it the same sort of penetrating blow struck at their superiority. And they are right. It is.

They cry out that it would take away the very salt and savor of their pleasure in Gauguin paintings (or whatever artist is the joy of the rapidly changing ultra esthetic taste by the time this book is printed) if they could not along with their esthetic pleasure in Gauguin feel a rich contempt for a large number of people who have never heard of him. They foresee that the struggle to be exclusive will become even more tragically hard than at present. These new conservatives have the same old feeling of their ancestors, that anything artistically admirable in the life of people-in-general is so much taken away from their own store of culture. It alarms them, it makes them angry to learn of any plan where it might become possible for the various sorts of ordinary people ultimately to have taste in matters which until now have been (so they choose to think) the exclusive property of well-to-do people and their hangers-on and not too many of these, if you

please. Some leisure is a prerequisite of culture. They are appalled to see leisure installed in ordinary lives. It is their devout hope that at least ordinary people will use it badly, and will because of it merely become more and more ordinary. How eagerly they collect and play up the evidence showing that they do. How instant and bitter is their incredulity of any evidence showing that they do not always.

The white-waistcoated old grandfathers must lie easy in their graves to see how earnestly their descendants are carrying on the battle of privilege, the old idea that every and any human good is considerably better if it can be monopolized by the few and kept away from the many, the old conviction that artistic and literary taste is only possible if well-scented by the conviction of personal superiority to the majority.

On the other hand the new "cause of adult education" has reason to cry as heartily as any politician, "Heaven save me from my friends." For among its partisans and those who practice it are, naturally enough, a great many people too ill-educated to know what they are talking about. Such people by the law of their nature have an inspired capacity for blatantly making the sort of half-baked claims which feed the vanity of the enemies of the idea. These damaging friends of adult education are too familiar to need description, too numerous to make description possible. We all know them; if not personally, through the monstrous claims of certain advertisements in our magazines;—the men who believe that the perusal of somebody's scrap-book, or even of somebody's else

five-foot shelf of books will make them ripely informed and cultivated; the people who think that the acquiring of information is education and who claim to be able to impart information in five-minute periods once in a while; the largest and noisiest crowd of all, who think that education means learning how to put more money in your pocket, and who claim to have an infallible recipe for painlessly inserting this sort of education into anybody's brain at any age.

Popular opinion . . . indeed I believe the law of the land . . . no longer permits the publishing of advertisements analogous to these in the matter of physical health; the sort of advertisements one remembers seeing as a child;—miraculous patent medicines, which for the small sum of fifty cents a bottle absolutely guaranteed to cure every human ailment from diseased kidneys through catarrhal deafness to rheumatism and consumption. But in the realm of mental growth and health they still flourish unchecked, and evidently find plenty of people credulous enough to make it a paying business to fleece them.

Such victims and the sharpers who prey upon them form a spectacle which is comic or pitiful according to one's point of view, and they are of course a gold-mine of joy to people whose surest source of satisfaction is in feeling superior, and who object to any attenuation of this pleasure.

But both these conscious and unconscious hindrances in the path of an attempt at universal education, while adding to the picturesqueness and variety of our American scene, are but two King Canutes, their arm-

chairs set in different parts of the beach. Whether we know it or not, whether we like it or not, whether we understand what education is or not (and we certainly are not very sure of that point) there is no doubt that we are in for more universal education rather than less. The rise of that tide is too plain to be doubted, much less to be stemmed. We shall be lucky if we can succeed in some sort of effort to direct it.

It has not, by any means, swept up the beach of our national life in one steadily continuous wave. Circumstances have favored it more in some places than in others. In the public library movement it found a natural course, along which it has boldly poured, shaping it into a deeper and cleaner canal for the new idea than the founders of libraries dreamed of, turning it into what is perhaps the most enduring and most valuable form for the new activity. In other places it has seeped gradually into marshy ground where it lies rather stagnant and often malodorous as in many of the commercial correspondence schools. Along with the more usually recognized economic causes it has steadily done a large part of the work of lifting the working class more nearly to its rightful place in society. In the Woman's Club movement it has filled thousands of small scattered disconnected pools and has brought a breath of its stimulating deep-sea air to hundreds of thousands of small, scattered disconnected lives. It sends leisurely old wheels spinning to a new rhythm as in the transformations which are coming into the spirit of museums.

Prophetic eyes have, for years, recognized all these

diverse appearances and many more, as part of the same great forward movement, more or less savory with the redeeming salt of a tide driven by mid-ocean forces. But I am no prophet, and this recognition is a new thing for me. Few of us are prophets. I do not think I malign the average reader of this book when I say that upon taking it up he is probably no more conscious than I was, a year ago, of the possible significance of the fumbling, scattered attempts at self-instruction which have been, all these years, set so thickly before our unseeing eyes.

Although we do not see it with the vision of the flesh as we see Valley Forge, our country is at this moment fighting for its life, at a turning-point of its existence. It is shut up within a prison of prosperity where the older doors to spiritual and intellectual life are locked. If it cannot burst open a new door . . . many new doors! . . . and fight its way to air, it will smother to death beneath its material possessions.

Do we perhaps see in this increasing effort towards self-education the crack of daylight in our darkness which points out one door that is not locked?

CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

ONE of the natural amusements of our race seems to be guessing how human beings would act if they were totally freed from any pressure either from law or public opinion. The never-ending and always profit-making stories of solitary castaways on desert islands proves our interest in this guessing game, although we know well enough that each story represents only another guess, and not in the least any information about the matter. The desert island has always seemed to us the only background possible for this absence both of law and public opinion, hasn't it? We were sure that anywhere else there was bound to be one or the other of these deterrents to human actions. There was not very much law in the early gold-digging days of California, but there was a powerful plenty of public opinion. And when we ponder on our present ills we think one cause is too much law and not enough public opinion.

Wherever else in the present world human beings might be free from those two traditional barriers, we were sure it was not in our complicated twentieth-century American Union. With a legislature to every state grinding out new laws every year, with public opinion throwing a thousand-pounds-to-the-square-inch pressure upon personal matters that are none of its business, we are convinced that we stagger along

under more than our share of those two commodities. How all the rebels have cried out for a refuge to which an American citizen might retire and live his life without legal interference and all this busybody curiosity about his doings!

Well, there is such a corner, right in our midst, a rather big one at that, in which the tidy little sum of seventy million dollars changes hands every year of our national life. There is a twilight, nay, a midnight zone in our country into which you can step without stirring from your chair and become as if you had put on the cap o' darkness instantly invisible to prying reformers and legislators. Safe within this realm-of-another-dimension, you can fleece your fellow-man to the limit of your imagination, you can lie with impunity—lie beyond the wildest flights of Munchausen; you can take money on false pretenses up into the hundred-thousands if you are smart enough; you can fool the dollars out of the pockets of the ignorant as no con-game man ever dreamed of doing; you can outrage every principle of integrity and honor—and still be quite comfortably certain when you see a policeman enter your street that he will only nod respectfully to you and pass on to give his austere attention to a little boy who has been accused of breaking a window pane.

Or if you are the other kind of man (such exist who to their honor and the credit of the human race resist the temptations of this midnight zone of dangerous impunity), you can conduct an excellently upright business, giving full value for every dollar re-

ceived, and rendering a real public service. Yet neither the law nor general public opinion knows enough about the matter to distinguish you from the dirty crook just around the corner from your honest and well-run office who is stealing money from widows and children, and anybody else quite impartially.

Let me tell you in detail some of the feats possible to you in that free, unobserved world. You can (I know you can, because plenty of other folks are doing it this minute)—you can say that you and your wife and the hired man are a college, and advertise that you will give college degrees to anybody who will take a course with you. Your “course” consists of typewritten pamphlets, copied and slightly altered from a couple of books for which you paid two dollars apiece. You charge seventy-five dollars to your “students” for the privilege of receiving these pamphlets through the mail once a week, till all have been sent. And then you confer on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity, or any other title which has taken his fancy or yours.

Nor do you need to conduct this profitable business with any hampering caution about publicity. Publicity can't hurt you. But you won't get any of it. You are all right legally, or if by a great exception your State is one of the very few that puts annoying restrictions on individual liberty in this matter, you have only to move across the line into the next one. You have done all the Law requires of you when you have filed with the County Clerk or with the required State Official^v your intentions of becoming a college. Nothing more is needed. Nor can those officials do anything spiteful to

you just because they happen to know that your wife and the hired man can't read and write, and that you left school after the sixth grade. Let them rave. The Law has not yet perceived that you exist. In only seven of the forty-eight states do the officials to whom application is made have any discretionary power with respect to granting the charters. All you need to do is to walk up to the legal slot-machine, poke in your written intention of becoming a degree-granting correspondence college and carry off from it as an ornament to your sitting room a charter, valid in thirty-two of our states in perpetuity; for revoking which there is no legal machinery whatever. This charter grants you the legal right to confer any degree you choose in the arts and sciences with no supervision. Thirty-eight states have no legal requirements whatever about the course of study. Forty-three of our states have no requirements whatever about the teaching force, either as to members or qualifications.

It has made me dizzy even to set down these statements, although every one of them is not only true in theory, but copious and actual fact. Do you ask how under the sun it is possible that all this is true in our America where a pickle-manufacturer must submit to the prying visits of an inspector to make sure he is not putting too much benzoate of something or other into his pickles, and where the ingredients of the patent-medicines must be printed on the bottles, harrowing though the proprietors of the medicines feel this interference with their personal liberty to be. Well, I'll tell you how it happens to be possible. It's very simple.

It ought to be familiar to us, because the same sort of thing has happened at about the same period of development in other phases of our country.

The notable parallel is what happened at the time of the California gold-rush. In the early days, when California was a Mexican colony, a peaceful, unambitious, agricultural country, given over to the raising of cattle and crops, with a settled population of mild, contented people, who expected no great change or advancement in their condition, whatever primitive legal system they had was quite sufficient to form the necessary framework of restraint for their unaggressive life. That corresponds to the quiet, academic world of this country up to twenty-five or thirty years ago, when it was still exclusively populated by professional scholars who were not in it for the money (to put it mildly) and who were almost handpicked for total lack of commercial acumen. Why should anybody with commercial acumen waste his valuable time in a world where the pickings were as meager as on a farm? Such scholarly, impecunious, helpless, high-minded, unenterprising people as the American academic set needed little restraint to keep them from assault and robbery; and what little restraint there was consisted of the public opinion of their own world, which was quite enough.

This idyllic pastoral of education continued its quiet life undisturbed exactly as long as any quiet pastoral life is allowed to continue undisturbed; that is till somebody strikes oil under the green grass of its meadows. The decent pastoral order of California was blown to

invisible bits by the turbulent invasion of men who wanted gold and didn't care how they got it. The sleepy, honorable decency of the American educational world succumbed for exactly the same reason; a sudden, quite unexpected attack from ruffians who recognized neither the law nor the public opinion of the world they invaded. About twenty-five or thirty years ago, rich pay-dirt was struck by a couple of pioneers in the field of selling lessons. Ever since, an ever-increasing horde of ignorant bandits have been pouring into a field of human activity which all these centuries has lived, safe as a dream, quite unnoted by gold-seekers. The two pioneers were two excellent, upright, well-organized, and efficient attempts to supply a need of the modern American public for the education of grown-ups who had no time to go to school. One of these has developed along the lines of plain, honest, vocational instruction into one of the largest and most respected commercial correspondence schools, whose only fault in the matter has been to prove that there is money—real money!—in correspondence schools. It has two classes of imitators, one made up of excellent self-respecting institutions, the other a veritable band of pirates. The other pioneer, even more dignified and worthy, Chautauqua Institution, tried to meet quite another need, the craving for more education among people too old to go to school, and has developed into all the myriad-branching departments of the University Extension Movement. The responsibility of Chautauqua for the present era of frightfulness consists in the fact that it proved the existence of unsus-

pected numbers of Americans who are *willing to pay money for the sake of a chance to learn something.*

This was news as electrifying as it was wholly unexpected to the professional adventurers of the country, and almost as important to them as the news of the discovery of gold in California could have been for their fathers and grandfathers. They passed it along from one to the other with their instinctive capacity to nose out what's-what in the world of easy money. It has had plenty of time to reach an army of those commercially interested, but has not yet had time to seep through to such stolid, substantial voters and citizens as you and I.

One can imagine how the fringe of society that lives on its wits must have received the news—probably with an ecstasy tempered by a wary incredulity of what seemed quite too good to be true. For nothing could seem less credible than the simple literal truth of this new gold-field.

"My cousin's father-in-law, down in Penumbria, Kentucky, has sure struck it rich," one may imagine one ne'er-do-well saying to another. "He's got a 'School of Memory.' Screened in his front porch for a comfortable place to live in, and never moves off'n it. Just puts his ads in the papers, about a course of lessons that'll fix up your memory so you can say off all the names in a telephone directory after one look at the book, or something like that. And he'll send you the course, twelve lessons, for thirty dollars the course, and corrects your papers so you learn it."

"Aw, go on," we can imagine the justly indignant

answer of the other, "quit your stringing. How many suckers can you catch with that bait?"

"Five thousand a year."

"At thirty dollars per?"

"At thirty dollars per, paid in advance. And only costs him a little bill of printing, and once in a while, when he gets snowed under with addressing the envelopes, a few days of cheap help to get caught up."

"But for the love of Mike, who corrects the lessons of the five thousand students?"

"He does," with a laugh.

"Like hell he does!" with another laugh. "I get you."

"But," with another wave of incredulity, "can't he get pinched for it?"

"No more than a minister preaching a sermon. Safe as a baby in its mother's arms."

How long do you think it would take people in search of easy money to throw up jobs as dishwashers and betake themselves to the selling of education, once such news had been washed up to them by the day's tides?

Or transpose into a slightly higher social scale (out of the ne'er-do-well class) the same sort of instinctively organized transmission of vital news, like the tom-tom telegraph of the jungle. Here are a couple of struggling young traveling salesmen not long out of high-school, perched before a lunch counter, complaining of the difficulty of getting their toes into the crack of the wall of success (by this they mean more pay).

"I heard of a pretty good thing, the other day,

that's kind of stuck in my head. Did you ever know anybody that ran a law-school?"

"Nope, never knew a lawyer in my life."

"I didn't say a lawyer. I said somebody that ran a law-school. I know a fellow that's just got taken on as salesman in a law-school and he's getting big money too."

"A salesman in a law-school? What's he sell?"

"Oh, he sells the course, same's you'd sell garters. Enough sight more in it too. It's his brother that's running it, and got it up. They're going to start an Electrical Engineering School for him to run, they think. They charge ninety-five dollars for the course of lessons. Got 'em out of law books in the public library, sort of written down in words of one syllable by a busted-up old lawyer (smart, though), who can't practice because he's always soused to the gills. They paid him five hundred down, and he thought he was made."

"How much do they pay the professors that correct the lessons? That must cut into the profits."

"Not so's you'd notice it. They only keep two people to look out for the lessons of a thousand students, and those two aren't professors. Just ordinary cheap clerks that mail out ready-made answers a week after they've sent the questions. Of course, they have to have lots more salesmen than that (twenty on the staff), and they pay them real money, too."

"Twenty salesmen, and two clerks to correct papers?"

"Just like I'm telling you."

"And there are poor fish that'll shell out ninety-five dollars for those lessons?"

"A cool thousand poor fish, and more coming every year."

"But" (we can imagine the reverent awe with which the young voice is freighted), "that means ninety-five thousand dollars *a year!*"

"You said it, and nothing to pay out of it but the rent of one room, a printing bill, and some help. All the rest velvet, and no risk, a fair divvy between the sales-organization and the owner. How about it?"

How long do you think it would take enterprising young men of superior intelligence, such as these, to drop the tiresome effort to sell furniture polish and breakfast cereals and form an energetic new "Medical Institute" which will confer the degree of Bachelor (or Doctor, if you prefer it) of Microbiology?

(No, I'm not inventing. Dickens himself could invent nothing half as pictorial as the facts.)

In 1849 for a time after the first gangs of reckless gold-seekers had burst in upon the dreamy rural peace of early California, things seemed as bad as they could be, except that they grew rapidly and steadily worse. There were no legal facilities available to the honest men among the adventurers, who were as indignant over the murderous hooliganism of the mob as any one else. This knowledge that they could not be punished by law brought the marauders quick to self-destroying insanity so that they became literally intolerable. Something had to be done, law or no law, and up sprang the Vigilantes and their hempen cords.

My guess about the correspondence school situation is that the limit of the outrageous period is close at hand, and that the strong and honorable members of that new and very useful profession must be about to rise up and defend themselves (since the law, always lumberingly behind the facts, does not as yet take cognizance of the doings of the educational bandits in their midst). The nightmare incredibility of the present situation probably comes from the fact that the whole business is something so new and unexpected that most people don't dream of its existence.

Did you have any notion that seventy million dollars are paid out every year by American citizens to get a chance to learn something from printed lessons through the mails? Do you, now that you know that, realize what seventy million dollars means in comparison with the money spent on our public school training? It is as much as the combined school budget of fourteen of our States added together. We would have a thing or two to say, wouldn't we, if every penny of that school money were not scrupulously accounted for? What if promoters were making, not only good yearly livings, but fifteen per cent, twenty-five per cent, fifty per cent, out of the money set aside to teach our children? Why should they be allowed to make that out of money spent to teach our grown-ups?

Seventy million dollars income a year, paid out of the pockets of wage-earning Americans who would like to learn something. Who gets it? During the year 1923 one of the larger correspondence schools signed a sworn statement that three-quarters of one cent out

of every dollar they took in went to pay for the instruction given. The rest went to high-priced salesmen and to the promoters. You are not surprised that there are a goodly supply of new millionaires who have sprung up during the short time since the paying correspondence school was invented.

It was in 1891, thirty-six years ago, that the first commercial correspondence school opened, the adaptation of an old tool to a wholly new use, as much of an experiment as Henry Ford's ramshackle self-propelled machine of about the same date . . . and almost as profitable a venture. That school opened with one hundred and fifteen students. There are now about two million students enrolled every year in correspondence schools. Do you know how many two million students are? It is hard to think in such numbers. Well, it is four times the number of all the students enrolled in all the colleges, universities, and professional schools in the United States. And not even enough rudimentary regulation to prevent the most arrant rascality. Not enough general information abroad to enable anybody from a little distance—from its advertisement in a magazine for instance—to distinguish an honorably conducted institution from a preposterous fraud. Did our extraordinary country ever create and endure a more extraordinary situation?

The majority of the two million are in the strongest, most vital, and still plastic age from twenty-two to thirty-five. In twenty-five years . . . which, as things go, is hardly time enough for us to have caught our breaths . . . from nothing at all this vast army has

sprung up and is on the march, not only with no help from our educational system in finding its road, not only with no prophetic guess at it beforehand on anybody's part, not only with no realization on our part of the bitter need for it, but without our even now being aware that such an army is in motion, looking for an answer to its questions.

When two million grown people in this country are looking for something they need, paying their money for the chance to find it, isn't it about time that some effort is made to protect them from sharpers and to give some aid and encouragement to the far-sighted, original-minded educators in the new field who have sprung up to try to meet the new need honestly and efficiently?

But why, we ask ourselves confusedly, why, all of a sudden, this stampede among grown-up people to learn something more than they learned in school? What's the point? People didn't use to. Never dreamed of such a thing. Isn't it perhaps one of those short-lived, intense American fads?

To answer this last question with a quite realistic materialism, no fad ever ran into the millions of dollars like this; for what is reported in this chapter is not half nor a quarter of what has been going on under our noses.

To answer the question of "what's the point?" it is hard to know which point to mention first. To begin with, there is the transformation in industry in the last thirty years. In 1896 few people, save a limited number of theoretical experts, knew anything about

electricity, or needed to know anything. Nor had any one of that time ever heard the word "garage," because there was no such thing. How many garages are now far flung and thick sown over our country, do you suppose? I think I can guarantee a little reeling on the part of your imagination at the idea of trying to number them. To succeed every one of them must have at least one man (and a working man, remember, with no qualms about dirty hands and broken fingernails) who knows more about electricity than anybody did thirty years ago, except professors of science. Who taught them, all those men in overalls who understand the electrical systems of our automobiles? They taught themselves with what help they could snatch out of the scrambled mass of instruction hastily thrown together by various agencies which saw their need and were quick-witted enough to try to meet it. Among those agencies was the^v night school and what is known as^v "vocational education," neither of them holding a candle to the correspondence school for the number of people reached.

Again, in every American factory, printing establishment, cotton or woolen mill, tool shop—the list is unending—in the place of machinery the management of which was learned by the slow old humane medieval method of growing up with them, new and monstrously more complicated machinery has been constantly installed. The workmen were forced to learn how to manage it, or lose their jobs. Who has taught them? Who was there in America (covered with schools for children as it was), who would and could teach a middle-

aged workman how to keep up with these racing changes and hold his own in his trade? And teach him without his losing temporarily the work which meant bread and butter for his family? He looked around him for help in that startling new crisis, and (unless he lived in a very large city, rich enough and enlightened enough to run night schools) there was no helping hand outstretched to him save the advertisement of a correspondence course on machinery. It saved the day for him and for the cause of American industrial efficiency.

Our colleges and universities hurried to do what they could; scientific and engineering courses were built up and enlarged. But these of course, were concerned only with boys who not only had no family responsibilities, but in most cases were supported by their parents during the period of study.

Moreover there entered in here the old caste-system tradition, acted upon though not avowed by our colleges and universities, that it is the business of institutions of learning to train those who are to become the commanding officers of society, not the rank and file. Practically none of the students of a resident college or university have the slightest intention of working with their hands.

Now, the peculiarity of the modern army of industry is that it will not function if the commanding officers are the only ones who are trained. The old days are gone when the private soldier (that is, the man working with his hands for day's wages) needed only to obey very simple orders and learn certain simple rules of thumb. Not to speak of anything else, modern ma-

chinery has cost too many good dollars to entrust it wholly to men who know nothing of the principles of mechanics. Many jobs done by men in overalls with dirty hands, who have no college degree, involve such great sums of money that they cannot be left to untrained brains. It is often said that modern machinery does much of the work which was formerly done by manual human skill, and that they can be tended by very ignorant men who need know no more than how to count up to fifty and throw a lever at the proper time. But such wonderful machines do not take care of themselves. Every one of them must be kept constantly in order by some highly skilled workman with considerable knowledge of the abstract principles of mechanics. While there are fewer of them than of the ignorant lever-throwers, the enormous expansion of our industry needs an ever-greater number. And none of them get their training in our schools for children, nor in our institutions of higher education for the young.

Nor are machine-shops, factories, and spinning mills the only places in America which, in the last thirty or forty years, have suddenly grown complicated, hard to understand and to manage beyond anything dreamed of in earlier times. In any and every business enterprise, from a department store to a grocery store, from a wholesale millinery establishment to a mail-order house, the margin of profit is narrower, the competition hotter, the situation harder to grasp, and the need for trained business minds immeasurably greater. Everybody in it must be more efficient and waste less

time than formerly, or everybody in it will shortly be looking for another job.

A hundred years ago a young man who wished to learn how to be a doctor went into the office of an older doctor, watched as well as he knew how the actual practice, guessed at the theory underlying it with the help of what books he could lay his hands on, and in the good old way learned to avoid mistakes by making a great many. Nursing was learned (if you could call it learning) in the same way. Fifty years ago the business of learning how to be a lawyer was conducted on the same fumbling, floundering, catch-as-catch-can system. Now, as the most elementary requirement for their practitioners, these three professions demand a careful systematic training before any responsibility is assumed.

It is only in the business world that the youngsters are still thrown out over their depth to sink or swim unaided by any training except what they can pick up from people practicing what the beginners desire to learn. And the business world is rapidly emerging from this phase, wasteful as it is both of human life and hard dollars. If there is one man on earth who ought to be an authority on the advantages of unaided floundering as a way of making progress, it is Henry Ford, who has made a modest little success in life under that system. And it is he who has made the wisest and deepest comment on it. "The great trouble with the school of experience is that the course is so long that the graduates are too old to go to work."

Henry Ford in this excellent aphorism, has only re-phrased out of his own experience, what Bacon said, many centuries ago, "Practice without theory is but routine and habit." Routine and habit as equipment for the many may have been enough to run a non-industrialized society organized along natural lines; but they are far from sufficient for our dangerously complicated, all too delicately adjusted modern organization. A man can run a water wheel very satisfactorily with no more abstract knowledge of physics or mathematics than a bright twelve-year-old boy. It is quite a different story to construct or even to take care of a hydro-electric plant on the same stream.

It is actually within the last ten years (so rushing are the changes taking place in this department of human activities) that the American business world has sharply felt the need of training its workers; and like magic, organized correspondence schools of commerce and administration have sprung up, good, bad, and indifferent. Against a background of sad-eyed doubters crying out that the Government is taking over all the activities, that a democracy necessarily degenerates into a mob of spineless dependents on a bureaucracy, American industry and commerce, confronted by life-and-death crisis, has felt singularly little impulse to ask for Governmental or professional aid. With a picturesque pioneer self-reliance and resourcefulness, industry and commerce have hastily organized their own system of education, relying on nothing but the incentives, restraints, and ideals familiar to them, the desire to make more money with less effort (most

potent spring of efficiency!); faith in free, unhindered competition as on the whole the best test of the right to survive; and a hard-headed reluctance to protect fools from their own folly, because (the theory is) their folly will get them in the end anyhow, and the sooner the better.

Until very recently nothing has been recognized in that code which would prevent any man from advertising that his course of lessons will teach anybody (no mention made of previous training or natural ability) a technical vocation like mechanical engineering "in a few pleasant lessons that will in no way detract from your present mode of life." The unspoken feeling has been that if anybody is imbecile enough to believe that he can learn mechanical engineering, or oratory, or "culture," or how to play the violin in a few pleasant lessons without interfering with evenings at the movies and attendance on dances . . . why, that's his hard luck. Anybody so thoroughly an idiot is fair game for whoever can empty his pockets.

The same unspoken inference used to rule all the commercial world, without question. Commercial public opinion interfered with no sort of advertising that kept within the limits of verbal decency. Merchants who wanted to advertise that they were selling pure silk stockings at the price of cheap cotton ones, were free to catch what suckers were catchable. But commercial intelligence has been sharpening and deepening itself by experience. A vital fact about business success has emerged to view, the fact that the very foundation of commercial prosperity is a certain sensitive and (for

business men) sacred and to-be-cherished organism known as "the confidence of the public." (Buccaneers whose advertisements fly the black flag of piracy are now recognized as enemies not only of their own victims but of other reputable men in the same line of business. It is no longer held as an unconscious basic axiom that anybody is a natural born idiot and hence not worth bothering with, if he doesn't know instinctively that you can't buy real silk stockings for the price of poor cotton ones, or that you can't become cultured and informed by reading somebody else's course of twelve lessons at seventy-five dollars or learn civil engineering without giving any time or effort to it. It is now recognized that the inability to detect on sight the gorgeously colored fraud of such statements is not necessarily a proof of innate idiocy, but may be only a lack of information and training; and hence that such "suckers" are not ipso facto beneath contempt, but may have real ability of another kind . . . and Heaven knows that our modern world needs all the ability it can locate. The acute commercial brain is waking up to this fact. We have learned that it pays to keep an expensive force of policemen and detectives to try, among other things, to protect green country boys from plausible strangers who wish to sell them gold bricks. There is no reason why plausible strangers should be allowed freely to advertise educational gold bricks.

Up-to-date business in other lines has now as a principle not to go beyond (or not very far beyond) the line of strict literal truthfulness. For example, decent, self-respecting, and respected department stores

try not to claim more than what is approximately reasonable for their commodities, within the well-recognized limits of certain conventional and rhetorical symbols. Of course such phrases as "absolutely the greatest value our buyers have ever seen" are used, but with as little hope of deceiving as the "so glad to see you" of social life.

A certain standard of realistic ethics, not imposed from without but growing up from within, is putting in order, after a rough-and-ready manner, the affairs of many departments of American business. It is a pretty sure bet that the shamelessness of the rotten members of the new profession will not long be allowed to befoul the very name of correspondence schools, which should be one of the best devices needed and invented by democracy to keep its citizenry up to the necessary standard of information. Those rotten members are examples of what unchecked, unintelligent, naked commercialism at its worst can do, when excited by the smell and taste of real money. Commercialism at its best . . . a remarkably acute, sound, and intelligent force when its own interests are concerned . . . must certainly take some steps to protect those interests. Already, some of the honest, intelligently-run correspondence schools have formed what they call the "National Home Study Council" in the interests of better education. Already Mr. Dana, of Newark, having put his shoulder to the wheel of the new democratic museum, is turning his attention towards a new plan for correspondence schools.

What else can be done? The public's never-satisfied

greed for wild-cat investment securities is proof enough that one sucker is still born every minute. In spite of Blue Sky laws, a great many widows and orphans still buy holes in the sand masquerading as oil-wells, or building lots under water at high tide. And yet with stocks and bonds, there is always a fixed money-value on which to base a test of security. How can any law be drafted which shall decide whether or not a school is prepared to deliver such an impalpable thing as education?

Perhaps there is little hope from the Law—except in refusing charters to the most openly fraudulent degree-granting “colleges.” But if we look at the history of investments, we see what may perhaps be one way out for correspondence schools. Fifty years ago the small investor who had five hundred dollars of savings had about as small a chance of getting it safely put out at interest as today a young mechanic has of getting his money’s worth in correspondence school instruction. He might or he might not. Today, the small investor can still throw his money away. Nobody can ever wholly protect a man from his own folly. But he has a great many honest helpers ready and anxious to advise him. The honest men in the investment business are constantly giving the widest publicity to the methods of sharpers. The banks furnish free advice. No reputable newspaper will publish investment advertisements without a pretty thorough investigation as to their reliability. A great many magazines furnish advice to any one who writes to ask for it, advice given either free or for a very small sum. It is not too much

to say that from having hardly a Chinaman's chance fifty years ago, the small investor now has no one but himself to blame if he makes a foolish investment.

Why couldn't the same sort of methods be applied in the matter of correspondence schools? Why couldn't the honest schools (and they are many) take it upon themselves to clean up the business by the greatest frankness in showing what they have to offer, and in stating what is done with the money paid for tuition. Why wouldn't publicity do its usual cleansing work here as elsewhere? Some figures as to what actually happens to those who enroll and pay tuition might be worth any amount of legal investigation and restriction. Also, why couldn't the magazines of the widest circulation constantly proclaim the fact that some schools give a fair return for the money they receive, and others do not?

Note.—The address of the newly formed National Home Study Council, where reliable definite information in detail can be secured about correspondence schools is, 839 Seventeenth Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

FREE PUBLIC LIBRARIES

RECENTLY in Boston, a not very old theater-building was torn down and to every-one's astonishment a complete small dwelling-house in good condition was found under the stairs, or in some such place. For some inexplicable reason the theater had been built over and around it. This oddity was in itself sufficiently unexpected, but what was more so was the fact that there seemed no explanation forthcoming of how it had happened. Nobody knew, nobody remembered, there was apparently no record about it. This in an articulate, literate, modern city. The reason for an occurrence which had happened certainly not more than seventy years before had vanished into the dust as completely as the meaning of the Etruscan language.

The twentieth century is like all others in that it can spare but the briefest glance at any abstract speculation, even the mildest. A few thoughtful people caught a half-glimpse through this curious little episode, of what it is that makes life so hard for historians. Then everybody turned away to the next sensation, and forgot this one with that high-powered human capacity to forget which makes it so necessary—and so impossible—to write histories. One generation apparently can dig the much-talked-of gulf of oblivion as well as the boundless and bare sands of the centuries.

This is of course the reason why we understand so little of what goes on around us. The past is always the key to the meaning of the present. It is practically impossible to understand what comes after without knowing what goes before. "How did it get that way?" is one of the most intelligent reactions possible to any fact. But even when the process of its getting that way takes place under our very eyes, we find it hard to keep our simianly jerky minds on it.

Here are the free public libraries of America, so widespread that hardly an American does not at some time or another personally feel their existence, so universally regarded as a necessary part of modern society that nobody openly questions their right to more or less public support. And yet not one American in ten thousand—I am absurdly conservative, in twenty thousand—has the slightest idea that this institution is new in the history of the world, new in our own history, nor any notion of how it started and grew. This is not because the origin of the movement is lost in the mists of time. No great popular movement in America is so recent as that which has given us free public libraries. Many of the pioneers of the idea are still living, vigorous men, active in the profession which probably seems to them their own invention, although they all admit a certain breathlessness over the speed and size of the landslide which, apparently, followed their tentative rolling over of an unimportant stone, some half-century ago.

If you had been living in the first part of the nineteenth century, you might have known casually about

two different forces (among many!) which were trying to affect human life in America. One was composed of a series of repeated efforts at communal, coöperative life. These attempts were rather spectacular, very conscious, conducted by many men in many places, men of high ideals, good education, intelligence, a crusading fervor and hope, and often considerable material means. If I say Robert Owen, Fruitlands and Brook Farm, you will know the sort of thing which looked so important and thrilling to early idealistic Americans. The other force (among so many) of which you might have heard, consisted, to the naked eye, of one individual, and that a queer, half-baked product of the revolutionary upheaval in France—a gesticulating, indiscreetly noisy Frenchman named Vattermare. He had been with vague qualifications for the job, an army surgeon in France, and then a ventriloquist and entertainer, and after that a half-educated man with an unimportant fixed idea, which must have looked to all the level-headed citizens of that time very close to a delusion. He wanted to arrange for an “Inter-national exchange of books,” an idea in which nobody else took much interest, but which he advocated up and down Canada and the United States in a series of mass meetings, where he spoke with much windy Rights-of-Man rhetoric on the glorious possibilities of the human race if given half a chance.

You know the kind of people who attend mass-meetings and pass resolutions there. And you know what is thought of such people and their meetings by the sober, responsible men who are laboriously running

any given government. The excellent leading citizens of Boston paid little attention to Vattermare's mass-meeting of 1841. But that publicity-seeking ventriloquist kept at it, vehemently, insistently, pushing the well-bred Boston officials hard with bits from the Declaration of Independence and other literary efforts usually kept for the Fourth of July and Commencement Day. Presently, buzzing back and forth, between Europe and America, he succeeded in persuading the City of Paris officially to make a present to the City of Boston of fifty volumes. (Fifty books! They send out that many nowadays to the district schools in any farming district.) The dignified City Council of Boston, who had been so far fairly successful in ignoring this Gallic gadfly, knew of course that the City of Paris was no negligible parlor entertainer, and that some official recognition must be made of the gift. A committee was appointed to "consider and report what acknowledgment and return should be made to the City of Paris for its gift of books, and to *provide a place for same.*" Note that last phrase. It is the beginning of the free public library movement in America. Those books had to be put somewhere, and there was no shelf yet existing on which to put books which belonged to the people and not to a school, or a college or a wealthy man. Vattermare's stone had rolled over.

And yet, even then, any sane man of the world would have given odds that Brook Farm was an interesting social experiment bound to influence the future, while that crank Vattermare and his fifty books could have no significance. It is hard, almost impossible to

predict the tendencies of an age you are living in; but looking back it is easy for us to realize that Brook Farm and all Robert Owen's impassioned, noble-hearted hopes for coöperative living had no chance to swim against the main current of nineteenth-century social development; but Vattemare, merely by being, however grotesquely, on the crest of a landslide, threw his pebble,—and started something. Don't let us put it too strongly. Vattemare did not start the Free Library Movement any more than the pistol shot at Sarajevo started the Great War. He switched on the spark when a cylinder happened to be at compression—the motor started. It is running yet. But the power was there, or the spark would merely have jumped, and gone out, as the others did.

It is quite easy now to run back up the years and see why that Boston committee did more when they met to consider that small matter, than a similar committee of equally high-minded, well-educated Russian gentlemen would have done in St. Petersburg of 1847 if the City of Boston had made them an unasked present of fifty books. They did more because they were different from Russian gentlemen, and from any other gentlemen who had ever lived. They had spent their lives in a society which for a century and a half had acknowledged in principle and increasingly carried out in practice, the idea that some schooling ought to be given free to all its children, not only to those whose parents had enough cash to pay for tuition. It takes a long time for any abstract principle to sink into the collective human mind. But a century and a half is long

enough. That principle then, had been sufficiently acted upon so that those men did not dream of questioning it as a premise. A premise suggests a conclusion. Almost automatically (once their attention had been forced to it by Vattermare's gesticulations) schools for everybody in youth suggested books for everybody in maturity. Access to the schools was free. Why not access to books?

Of course, being Anglo-Saxons they showed no light-minded Latin haste in putting into practice what they had just recognized in theory. And having been brought up under the Town Meeting system, they had in their bones the necessary caution about recommending any new idea that might mean more taxes. Their report read: "The Committee do not recommend that the City should make any appropriation for the purchase of books, or hold out any encouragement that it will be done hereafter. The Committee only propose that the City should receive and take care of any volumes which may be contributed for that purpose." They thought they were being very cautious and prudent. They did not in the least realize that the solid ground under their feet was sliding them and their gesture of prudence along bodily to a new destination. It slid fast. In the very next year, the Massachusetts Legislature quietly invented and passed a revolutionary new law which made it legal for Boston to tax itself for a free public library. Thirty years after this, nearly every state in the Union (except the always consistently backward few), had followed with a body of "library laws." Moreover, the powerful, purposeful American

Library Association which knew perfectly well what it was about, had been founded.

Let us back up again towards the source of things . . . those Yankee committee-men had behind them so strong a tradition of public schooling that they were not surprised or shocked by the idea of free access to books as part of the natural privilege of any citizen. Where did that tradition come from? Traditions don't just happen. Certainly the Forefathers didn't bring it with their language, their laws, and their furniture from the Old Home, for of all the Western Protestant countries, England has struggled hardest and stood out longest against the idea of general free schooling for all its children alike. The public school idea came from Holland of course. Any historian will tell us that. But how did it happen in Holland? Where did Holland get the idea of secular schools for all the young? Nobody else in Europe at that time so much as dreamed of it. The Renaissance kept its passion for learning quite apart from any recognition of the masses as creatures with potential brains. Erasmus's great friend, Thomas More the humanist, provided slaves to do the necessary dirty work of life in his Utopia quite as naturally as Plato did. And it is quite certain that neither of those Utopians had any notion of granting schooling to slaves.

Apparently the first conception of general universal education came to life in the brain of a Moravian church radical of the seventeenth century called Comenius, whose own statement of his scarlet program was nothing more or less than "the teaching to all men

of all the subjects of human concern." And how, pray, did Comenius happen to have that extraordinary idea, so wholly out of the spirit of his time? Ah, the man was a genius. And with that, the door of inquiry is slammed shut in our faces. We can go no farther. Nobody knows what a genius is, nor what makes him. The only thing known certainly about geniuses is that the world is always different because they have lived. Soon or late, the man of genius molds human life toward his ideas.

This genius lived in the period of European history when people were perhaps least able to give their attention to ideas of any sort, the Thirty Years War occupying the center of the stage. Nobody, as a matter of fact, did pay much attention to him except Sweden and Holland, the latter nation at the top of its prosperity and liberality of thought. And it was in Holland, exposed during almost a whole generation to the new idea of public schools, that the first New Englanders lived before they started their own new society.

That society ran itself for about a hundred years admitting more and more universally the need of schooling for all young people. Then, after about the usual century it takes for the race to move forward one notch, it took the next step. It produced Benjamin Franklin, not a genius, but a man with a mind of clear, practical originality, which did not do much abstract thinking, but which looked keenly into the nature of familiar elements and existing institutions and saw that all sorts of better uses could be made of them;—which saw that it is not inherent in the nature

of a small flame to flicker, and invented the lamp-chimney;—which observed that smoke will follow up an outlet even if it is not directly above the flame, and invented the stove;—which perceived that in a country where everybody, even working-people, can read and write, there is no longer any natural exclusive connection between books and people of leisure and means. There was one practical obstacle, which still limited private libraries to the wealthy . . . the cost of books. Franklin saw how to get around this—by coöperation, and invented the public library. Not yet the free one.

Of course the time was ripe for his idea or it would not have lived. In antiquity, collections of books and documents were clustered around the temples and the residence of reigning families. Later on the Catholic Church collected and safeguarded books. During the medieval times libraries and provisions for giving schooling to a very few people were parts of ecclesiastical life. From the Renaissance on, as institutions of learning slowly grew away from the Church, they naturally took with them the institution of the library. And there matters rested, till Franklin, a product of the Massachusetts public-schools, perceived that libraries are a natural part of any literate life without regard to the social class of the reader.

In 1732 Franklin, together with a group of other ‘artificers,” started the first subscription library in the world, the first attempt towards an easy access to books ever made by plain folks who worked for their living more or less with their hands. The idea was as simple as slipping a lamp-chimney over a flickering

flame. And yet nobody had ever thought of either device. They all chipped in together, bought books and used them in common. By the time forty years had passed, this plan was so generally accepted and acted upon that most people would have been astonished to learn it was a new one. A century afterward (you see, apparently, it always takes about a century for an idea to penetrate) subscription libraries were all the thing. Progressive communities everywhere were starting them. Rich people began to leave money to them, always the surest sign that an institution is in fashion. Everybody was used to the idea of secular, non-academic libraries, open to anybody of any class, rich or poor, who could spare the very small annual membership fee.

The committee which met in Boston to consider what to do with those fifty books given to the city were thus entirely familiar with free schools, tax-supported, and also with public libraries, privately supported. The next logical step was, of course, free books as a sequel to free schools. The theory of the free library was already by inference in their minds. To put it into public practice did not scare them very much, for it had been in private practice for a hundred years. No wonder that Vattemare's little push set them off. They had been hanging poised on the brink for all their lives.

But let us be fair to those intellectually consistent Bostonians. When they reported favoring a free public library, they were testifying to the faith that was in them, although it went contrary to some known experience. For, though the paid, subscription library

was a familiar success, the free library had been given a trial only shortly before, and had failed. Before Vattemare, before the Boston Public Library, the educational departments of various progressive states (beginning with New York State in 1835) made a generously intended and wholly impractical attempt to get books freely to the people. A system of free libraries, paid for by the State, was organized in connection with the district schools as part of the school system, not for the whole population. Idealistic enthusiasts worked as if their lives depended on it to persuade legislatures to appropriate money for this worthy purpose. The money was forthcoming (oh, lots of it, thousands and thousands of dollars, up into the quarter million, a vast sum for those days), was sent out into the country districts, the books were bought, the movement seemed launched . . . and fell flat. Everything came true which the bitterest enemy of universal education could have hoped. Nobody used the books, nobody bothered enough about them even to know where they were. They disappeared forlornly in neglect and dust, in less time than it had taken to get the money for them. Every high hope, and there had been many, was quite brought to the dust. Enough to discourage any believer in the public library idea? More than enough. So the Boston Committee may well have hesitated. But they made their choice, and as the movement developed, either the Time Spirit which was preparing the American People for self-education had grown more potent—or more probable and less fanciful, fore-

sight prevented the repetition of the vital errors of the earlier scheme.

Nothing seems to me to show more of the vitality of the movement towards universal education than the fact that this knockdown blow scarcely caused the free public library movement to hesitate. It delayed the idea only about thirty years. Then having learned a lesson and gathered force, the movement surged forward again, this time with its feet solidly on the ground. Its sponsors had learned that books chosen by ignorant rural school directors at the mercy of unscrupulous book-agents, will inevitably be left to the care of nobody and the oblivion of everybody. They had learned that the library like all other human institutions will not run itself, no matter how right the principle underlying it. They had learned in short that the devoutest trust in democracy and the common people needs also to keep its powder dry. The next time the spirit of the time returned to the charge and attempted to provide free books for the masses, the books were given a place to themselves and a custodian to look out for them. An entirely different custodian too, from the old variety who was really only a later version of the chains with which books in medieval libraries used to be made fast to the reading desks. The modern American librarian came into existence, and to the shocked horror of the guardians of the old traditions of bookishness, they are turning the library into something entirely different from what it has ever been, and making it such a tool for furthering universal education as the world has never seen.

I am not joking about that "shocked horror." Nothing is more lively than the antipathy of the older more conservative English and Continental librarians to the "tomfoolery" (their own term) of the American free public library idea and practice. They do not understand it. They do not wish to. They disapprove of it with all their souls.

Why are they so hot about it? Why should they feel such intense disapproval of something that doesn't seem to interfere with them? They're right in feeling strongly about it. It is a great deal to them. Their instinct recognizes it for what it is, another phase of the modern attack on privilege, on the prestige which is given to a few human beings by having the entrée to something which is not accessible to all. It is another thrust at the idea that one of the main advantages of "being educated" is to be able to feel superior to other people.

This prestige of exclusiveness on grounds other than native intelligence is not, to put it mildly, an inherent part of sound scholarship, but it has been for so long bound up with the idea of libraries that without it old-style booklovers feel that learning would lose its dignity. Every thought, hope, and action of the American free public library movement is a hearty thrust at this prestige, and wrings groans from people who enjoy feeling superior. But what good does their indignation do them? All together, pell-mell, those who cling to prestige as an essential part of book learning and those who hunger and thirst to give book learning to everybody who is capable of it, all are being swept along like chips by a current too big for any of us to see, the

spirit of the time, which always carries along with it, willing or unwilling, everybody it finds in its path.

To find something in the spirit of the times with which one can be in harmony, is to be happy. The really blessed people of any age are those in accord with at least one aspect of contemporary life—the higher the better. They need none of the usual bribes and rewards held out by society to persuade people to make themselves useful. What salaries were paid the Jesuit missionaries who went out into our American wilds to share their salvation with the Iroquois? How much money did George Washington make out of the painful years when he was struggling for a cause the success of which would make him personally not a whit more comfortable than he had been born?

That is why the ill-paid, ill-recognized American librarians form such an astonishing spectacle of serenity and genuine happiness in the midst of our restless, discontented, stuffily prosperous American life. They are sure they are doing something worth while. That certainty, and enough bread and butter to keep physically alive, has always made human beings happier and more vital than any heaping up of cash or medals. Their working hours are untroubled by any of our haggard riddles and doubts. We feel that we ought to have an opinion, and a wise one, on the rights of labor, of capital, of women, of children, on the value of industrialism, conservatism, radicalism, on the future of the family, of the nation, of the world. Of course, our profound ignorance about all those subjects makes us uneasy about our opinions on them and half-hearted in

the actions we base on those opinions. But librarians are absolutely doubt-proof on the one conviction which is the mainspring of their laborious lives—they absolutely know, as few people know anything, that there are in books heaped-up golden treasures of beauty and sadness and hope and resignation and information and fun and philosophy and understanding, so richly diverse that there is not a human life that would not be the better, finer, for sharing them. And they base their lives on this knowledge. You may be capitalist or apprentice, plumber, house-mother, or radical bomb-thrower—the librarian is forced neither to agree nor disagree with you. He sees you only as another human being certainly capable of enjoying and profiting by what he has to offer. The ideal of universal education, of the improvement in quality of each inhabitant of the country seemed the tiniest of Quixotic sparks in the brain of Comenius. It burns with a clear heat in the hearts of our American librarians, protected (quaintly enough) from too violent winds by the library lamp-chimney invented by Benjamin Franklin. The best of them are penetrated with a religious sense of what books might mean to human lives. They glow with Apostolic ardor which they pass on in greater or less degree even to the plainest and most backward of small-town amateur librarians. Go to one of their conventions and you will be touched by their warm-hearted, New Testament desire to reach not only the traditional well-dressed wedding guest, but the halt and lame and blind, hiding in the byways and hedges. They cannot rest, day or night, for thinking of those

not yet reached, of opportunities for service not yet realized.

Why, in the midst of twentieth-century commercialism, do librarians renounce self to preach this new gospel? I do not know. It may be that the spirit of democracy or its double, the urge towards universal education, from time to time reaches out and anoints its chosen missionary from among the crowd of money-getters. Or if you prefer less mystical philosophy, you may say that the unworldly souls (there are some in every age) who in the seventeenth century saw no goal except the conversion of distant heathen, nowadays find opportunity for self-expression nearer at home. But whatever the cause, there they are, the most devoted, purposeful, successful disinterested company of practical idealists in our muddled twentieth-century America.

For though librarians have a vision they are not visionaries. They have always applied their intelligence to the definite problem before them. Following implicitly their new "inner light," they have turned their backs on all the library traditions cherished from the days of the dried-brick books of Babylon, and have set out towards their only guessed-at destination with an unconquerable ardor mixed with inspiration and common sense. And how rapidly they have transformed themselves and their world! Fifty years ago, in 1876, the first meeting of the American Library Association was held with a handful of pioneers, only a very few of whom represented the very few free public libraries then existing. And yet men old enough to vote at that

time, see now free public libraries on every hand—so widespread and ever-present that every one takes them for granted like air to breathe or water to drink.

"A couple of hours to wait for that train? Gracious! What'll I do all that time? Where is the public library of this town?" We look for it as instinctively as for the post-office, as the movie theater.

"Polly, stop in the library on your way to work this morning, will you, and ask the librarian to give you whatever they have about the history of lace-making." (Or Maya civilization or the geology of Patagonia or the rubber plantation of Sumatra.) Or, "Hold on a minute, Henderson, let me telephone to the library to ask them to find out what year the Charlie Ross case happened." Did you know, by the way, that many libraries now have "telephone" librarians, whose whole business is to answer telephone inquiries? In half a century the free public library has emerged from nothingness into an entirely accepted, indispensable national institution.

Fervor, tempered by intelligence. That has been the secret. And a vast deal of applied intelligence has gone into the work. Libraries had, until lately, been storehouses occasionally entered by a few people who made a life work of their use of books and who consequently had plenty of time to find the volumes they needed. The librarian was there chiefly to see that none but the "right sort of readers" invaded the sanctum. As late as twenty years ago, no one not vouched for by two London householders could obtain a reader's card at the British Museum. The new librarians desired, as

men desire salvation, to make the use of books possible for everybody, not only for professional and leisurely book-users, but for that formidable democratic everybody so detested and feared by lovers of privilege. All the professional technique of the old-style librarians and all the experience of the ages told the new librarians that their ideal was noxious, preposterous, and moreover, utterly unattainable. They turned inside out every technical detail and proved the experience of the ages to be a cowardly granny.

Did they need it if they were to make books and their contents accessible to all sorts of people, a wholly new system of cataloguing? A wholly new system of cataloguing was forthcoming. The card catalogue of modern times is no casual happening, interesting only as a technical detail to professional cataloguers. Nor is the modern free public library building, different from any other building ever constructed by man, a mere whim of modern architects trying to think of something new. Both card-catalogue and modern bookstacks are as direct and purposeful manifestations of the spirit of democracy as the ballot-box. Perhaps more efficient. Without them a busy citizenry would not have time to find the books it needs.

Whenever an absolutely established axiom of human wisdom and experience obstructed the path, the new free library flew in its face and beat it down. It began to be apparent that even the card catalogue did not bring books close enough to the mass of ordinary readers. The open shelf system (free access to the shelves) was invented to the tune of panic-struck

prophecies among the conservatives of what frightful ravages would be made among the defenseless books if the rabble was turned in among them. The innate badness of human nature (said the old-style custodian of books) would flare up with all its traditional destructiveness, the books would be stolen wholesale, and wantonly mutilated. How—they asked—could any watch be kept on people wandering freely among the book-shelves? And if no watch was kept, of course, the books would be stolen. In actual practice, the innate badness of human nature has flared up in large cities to the extent of a loss of from nine to seventeen books for every ten thousand circulated, and in small communities of from two to nine in every ten thousand, a smaller percentage of loss, probably, than takes place from our own private shelves at home out of ordinary human carelessness.

Do you ask how in the world librarians, presumably no smarter than any of the rest of us, could possibly have known beforehand that the public would respond in this way to trust in them? They did not know. They are no smarter than we are. But the best of them, the majority of them are transfigured by giving themselves up, as none of the rest of us do, to a vast movement greater than themselves, the subconscious certainty of democracy that to survive, it must have better brains among its citizens. They have the deep, instinctive wisdom which comes from true inspiration. Yes, they are indeed, inspired,—those spectacled, ill-paid, uncommercial men and women who care for what they are doing vastly more than for themselves and hence are

happier than kings and emperors, aye, even more than highly paid super-salesmen.

Again, they were told that the absolutely universal experience of mankind proved that human beings only value what costs them something, and despise what is free, even if it is fine. Without a shred of evidence, they divined something more in common folks than cynical observation had ever been willing to admit, and clamored for the abolition of the subscription library and for wholly free access to books. Wise elders told them that the membership fee of the subscription library was so small that it could not be a barrier to any one; and that to pay a fee gave a value to books as to everything. The new librarians believed that books had value enough of their own, pushed a little harder, and in one after another institution the fees were abolished. In every case, without a single exception, the change to perfectly free access to the books doubled and trebled the numbers of people using them,—quite against all that had been prophesied.

Again, they found themselves in a profession with as fixed and rigid a high-choker idea of its personal dignity as the profession of arms. This is of course a superlative statement, but not exaggerated. The librarian of the older generation felt himself a gentleman and a scholar set to guard books against the depredations of other gentlemen and scholars. It was not his business to try to urge books on people. The only people who could possibly profit by reading were those who knew enough and had leisure enough to go to the library and to look for the books they wanted as long as was

necessary. Safe in the eighteenth century sat those dustily dignified gentry, with their dusty unused books about them. One look at them was enough for the new prophets drunk with the divine wine of a new purpose and with a sansculotte enthusiasm for the sort of people who had always been sedulously kept out of libraries. Straight away from dust and dignity they ran, out into the brilliant, garish twentieth century where they picked up for their own use, the keenest tool modern commercialism had invented, advertising. "But, wait," cried, from both sides the natives of commercialism and the advocates of dignity, "Hold on. You're making a mistake. Advertising was invented to make money with . . . to persuade people to buy more goods."

"I don't care what it was invented for," cried the modern librarian joyfully, "I'm going to use it to persuade people to read more and better books."

"But the only people who can use it successfully are the people who get a lot of money out of it for themselves. A cash reward is the only reliable mainspring of action, anyhow."

"You wait and see," said the librarian and proceeded, to the extent of his tragically limited resources, to advertise the free public library, putting into his publicity campaign enough unpaid ingenuity, intelligence, energy, resourcefulness, and knowledge of psychology to sell untold quantities of life insurance, real estate, or floor varnish.

In the language of the world, there is nothing in it for him when the librarian succeeds in circulating more books and better books. We are taught to believe that

no human beings (or at least not enough of them to count) will really give themselves to any enterprise which has nothing in it for them. And yet no high-powered salesman with a large percentage commission on his sales is any more enthusiastic over putting through a big deal, than a modern librarian over increasing the circulation on non-fiction books, or over reaching a class of readers hitherto untouched.

They were the creative-minded pioneers in the matter of books for children. It is hard to remember how disdainfully the earlier European librarians spoke only a few years ago of the silly sentimentalism of "children's rooms" in public libraries, blaming it on the regrettable prevalence of women librarians in the United States. It was not that they thought children would be noisy and disturb the serious readers. The arrangements made to keep the children separate were too obviously successful for that logical fear. No, it was not logical at all. It was a wounded tradition quivering in distaste of something new. They found the *idea* of children in libraries somehow undignified, almost ill-bred, as much out of place as a cooking-class. Their minds had set granite-like in the conception that libraries are for scholars and students *only*.

This point of view has been so rapidly and completely wiped out that you are probably surprised to know that it ever existed. The European successors to those librarians no longer have this feeling. They study American library methods with children, and apply them to their own conditions as rapidly as they can get the money to do it. In the same eager, forward-looking,

creative way, our librarians are blazing a new path to the use of books as tools for the continued and universal self-education of our grown-ups. They are not only finding the path and blazing the way to make it plain, they are not only struggling to kindle the inevitable inert, unimaginative minority in their own profession, but they are with energetic enthusiasm facing the necessity and tackling the job of dragging along with them the inert and unimaginative mass of their fellow-citizens . . . the hardest task in all democratic enterprises.

In the matter of public libraries we have a tendency, just as we have about our public schools, just as all human beings have about all their enterprises, to sit back comfortably and admire what we have already done. But librarians disturb this sleepy peace much more waspishly than school officials do. Whatever saving constructive dissatisfaction there is with our far from satisfactory public school system is not most loudly expressed by the officials in it. Enlightened teachers, superintendents, and school-commissioners are not at all convinced that our public schools are ideal, but for various reasons (prudence, discretion, inertia, despair of the situation's ever being any better, hope that it is already getting better) they are by no means passionately outspoken about their feeling. They talk to each other about it in their professional conventions, but they do not write many signed letters to the newspapers about it.

The spokesmen of the American Library Association seem to have no traditions of professional reticence.

Just as frequently as they can manage it they insert disquieting items of library news in our daily press. They count that day lost which has not pricked at least one example of hundred-per-cent complacency about our public libraries. The smugness with which we show off a fine library building to a foreign visitor makes them see red, and brings down about our ears a clatter of salutary statistics:—"Bragging about our American public library service, are you? Wait till we get it. We're only started. We haven't begun to cover the ground. Don't you know that 83 per cent of our rural population is without access to any local public library at all? That more than one-third of our counties have no public libraries within their boundaries? And, mind you, this is counting every single, poverty-stricken, small, meagerly supported collection of books which calls itself a 'public library.' Don't you know that there exist in our public libraries only six-tenths of a book for each person in our country? That during the twelve months of each year only two books per person are circulated? That only thirty-two cents per person are spent on public libraries? That there are fifty millions of people now in the United States who have no public library near enough for them to use? Consider this, oh, self-praising American, that in England (yes, down-and-out England) and in Czecho-Slovakia (yes, those Slovak Hunkies) they have almost reached the point of universal public library service; while as yet, forty-four per cent of our American people are without free access to books."

Librarians do not merely deplore the obstacles in

the way of a free use of books by a larger number of people, they roll up their sleeves and with war-cries rush out to do battle with those obstacles. Some of those difficulties, many of them, can be pushed out of the way by self-forgetting sacrifices on the part of librarians. Others by clamoring for more sinews of war either from public or private money-chests. But there is one unexpected and puzzling difficulty discovered by librarians in their exploration of adult education from their point of view. Even in the most favorable cases, with plenty of money to spend on books suitable for self-educating grown-ups, with a staff of competent and devoted librarians to put over the idea and practice of adult education, they run head-on into the stubborn fact that the right sort of books for such an audience have with rare exceptions not been written.

Professor Robinson's imaginative and creative mind has brought this fact home to us more vividly than any one else in his own rarely valuable book, "The Humanizing of Knowledge." But he is not alone. It is a fact which has loomed up darkly before every one who casts even a glance at the possibilities of continued intellectual activity as a part of ordinary mature life.

The point is that a new class of readers has risen so quickly that nobody was ready for them. These new readers for whom there are practically no books, may lack formal education and have limited vocabularies, both characteristics traditionally associated with children and young people. But children's minds are always immature, and young people seldom have much experience of life. Such is not necessarily in the least

the case with the new seeker after adult education. His instinctive perceptions, based on years of actual struggle with reality, are often sounder and truer than those of college professors. And yet he finds studying harder.

There are two difficulties in reaching him with instructive books even when he sincerely wishes to be instructed. First, he is economically and in every other way independent. He is not forced as students are to read on in a dull book because he must pass an examination on it. The book must be well-written enough to be interesting to him. The second difficulty is mostly of language. He has not spent years of his youth in learning the terminology in which most instructive books are written. But a vast deal of such terminology is cumbersome left-over medieval tradition which would be much better left behind. Writers being mostly formally educated cling to their Latinisms, both verbal and intellectual, as for their lives. It is hard not to. All fixed habits are hard to break. I find myself so clinging, in spite of honest efforts to break loose.

Now librarians are exasperated beyond endurance by the spectacle—always agitating to them—of a reader, an actual precious potential reader, standing with his hand out, asking for a book which is not on the shelves, not yet, as a matter of fact, written. “It *must* be written,” they cry indignantly, and set all their machinery in motion to drag it out from the minds of the writers who might perhaps do it. One of the most important parts of their “Commission on the Library and Adult Education” is a piquantly named

"Sub-Committee on *Readable Books*." This Committee makes a long list of the vital subjects about which a reasonable amount of information is necessary to every modern, on which no usable books have been written. Dr. Edward Slosson with all the endless resources at his command, fine-tooth-combed the field of science for readable books on physics and found not one. Nor any usable books on chemistry which gave a reasonable idea of its underlying laws. All the expert research of reference librarians has failed to discover even one satisfactory and simple book on law and general legal questions—and yet consider how terribly one is needed. Nor on business problems in general; nor on—but the list is indefinitely long.

The demand has come, loud and exacting, before the supply was ready. Librarians have, in their invaluable series of "Reading with a Purpose" booklets, made easily available to us the titles of all the books there are, in most fields of human knowledge, suitable for purposes of general self-education in mature life. But they have no intention of stopping there. They are fighting to enlarge the supply for the new demand.

They fight for books to hand out to us, and when they get them they untiringly use all the wiles of the "ideal salesman" to keep them off their shelves and in our hands. From the beginning of the movement, before commercialism had discovered its cash value, modern librarians were formulating their tradition of what is now considered the "latest technique of successful salesmanship":—unfailing courtesy, endless patience, entire self-forgetfulness. And above all no

taint of condescension towards the public. Unlike salesmen, they do not expect to get more money out of the public by being kind and friendly to it. And yet they are. How can this be? Where did they get their feeling that the custodian of books and the user of them are both equal citizens of one commonwealth, different only in having different functions; and that no matter what the function of the reader may be, it is perfectly certain that the function of the librarian is to make it as easy and pleasant as possible for everybody to use whatever books will benefit him.

However did librarians, notoriously impractical as to securing money, ever happen to hit upon the technique of the ideal salesman so long before the keen nose of intelligent business had smelled out its usefulness in commerce? Because for librarians this "technique" was simply the sincere expression of what they felt. They were and are once more the expression of a new idea about what attitude to take towards dull, dirty and uneducated people. They act on the conviction that there is no use in trying to build a world apart from them because that can't be done; nor to employ them as a pretext for smartly satirical saying about their being sweaty and dull, because that only inflames one's always too well-nourished vanity; nor to dole out charity to them because that never gets anybody anywhere. The economic organization of the twentieth century evidently intends to give everybody a chance to wash; librarians intend to do their part by giving everybody a chance to sharpen his wits. Part of this new idea and attitude is the perception that

many well-fed people in fine linen, while not sweaty, are dull and uneducated and need help as much as illiterates. And the sum total of it that it is worth anybody's while to help anybody make more of himself.

The current of our time, setting towards the attempt at universal education, has picked librarians up and swept them ahead of most of us toward a modern conception, repellent and distressing to minds colored with left-over feudalism, alarming to cautious people because it is as yet untried and unproved. This conception is that the masses, the general public, ordinary folks, are not only worth serving, but that in sober actual fact the only hope for the future for any of us, even for us highly superior people who talk about "the masses," is to see that they are well and intelligently served.

Of course at the very outset, and during every hour of its existence, the free public library movement, like all manifestations of practical democracy, has encountered the specter-like riddle which may turn out to be the reef on which the whole democratic movement will wreck itself; or which may, on the contrary, yield to the new concerted attacks being made on it from new directions. This riddle runs (one must state it often because one encounters it everywhere), "Are the masses, ordinary folks, the general public, *worth serving?*" "Are they fit material on which to found a lasting and desirable society, or will they resist all that can be done for them by the most devotedly intelligent care, and in the end only drag down to a brute

level of worse-than-mediocrity any society which tries to fit itself to them?"

This is the question which confronts everybody who moves hand or foot in the modern world. It is such a life-and-death matter that people feel deeply although they know nothing about it. A certain number are sincerely terrified at the idea of putting culture and civilization at the mercy of the general public. A certain other number are on fire with a generous shame at having more culture and civilization than others. It is unphilosophical to take sides, to approve or condemn the experiment beforehand. Unphilosophical and quite futile. Our period in history has evidently decided to put the matter to the test, to find out the truth about the capacity of the masses as rapidly as means can be invented to try the necessary experiments. In the United States the American free public library might be called the spearhead of this thrust. With all their energetic whole-hearted American certainty the new librarians believe that the experiment of sharing the best with everybody will succeed, can't help succeeding, and the object of their lives is to carry it forward in their field as completely as they can devise the ways and means.

They have a number of successes on their side. Most of the calamities predicted by the pessimists have not materialized. Easy access to books for the mob has not hurt scholars at all. On the contrary, the same technic of arrangement and distribution which has enormously facilitated the use of books by ordinary folks, also simplifies the task of learned research, and

saves years of time to serious students. The "rabble" whom librarians so warmly welcome into the temples of books reward their faith with a devout, orderly respect for books and a warm liking for the institution of libraries, quite beyond anything which could have been imagined by any one who had only observed the tepid lack of interest in the older libraries formerly taken by that élite minority of the nation's youth, undergraduates in college.

But the heart of the matter has not been reached, because not enough time has gone by. The question, "Won't the masses spoil the best instead of enjoying it?" still stands darkly unanswered. It is apparent that more people will read more books than was believed possible. But will they read better books? Or will they merely make poor books more widespread? Above all, who in a complete democracy is the man for the job of deciding which *are* better books and which books shall be put in public libraries? Shall the present taste of the masses decide the matter? That always-wrong vote of the majority? Or shall a minority decide according to the taste which they hope to cultivate? That never works, either. Some one of the various minorities is always right. But which one?

I am not a librarian, and am not in their secret councils. In the fastnesses of their technical discussions they may have found some answer to what seems to everybody else a bottomless black pit in their theory. But if they have hit any sound principle for the selection of books for free public libraries I have never heard of it. How could there be any principle sound enough and broad enough to apply to the wholly diver-

gent tastes and *needs* of a whole citizenry? It is unthinkable. Who could be wise enough to choose the right books? And then to distribute them to the right people? It would take omniscient wisdom. And our American librarians, for all their zeal, are not a bit more omniscient than anybody else. Suppose, even, that omniscient wisdom had selected the right books and that the general public would not read them. Would they still be the right books for those people?

Is this perhaps a fatal defect which will keep the pretty machine from going on and being of true practical use? It sounds ominous, as though it might be like the one false calculation which always keeps the most ingenious perpetual motion machine from working. Perhaps, as in the case of perpetual motion, there may be something inherently wrong and impossible in the very idea that free access to books may ever create good taste in a larger number of people.

During the war, at the time of the construction of the Liberty motor, one of our most brilliant American mechanical geniuses was called in as consulting expert. He was taken to the room where the beautifully clean, polished motor was exhibited in state on a great table, and was asked his opinion as to the value of this or that detail of mechanism. He said, "I am a man of life-long experience with machinery, and I know enough to know that I can't tell anything about a motor if I see it standing still. Set it to do the work it is supposed to do, and after I've watched it in action for a while, I can tell you something about whether it will work and how to improve it."

The library is a machine which is steadily function-

ing before our eyes, year after year. In spite of this great theoretical weakness, it seems to do pretty well the work it hoped to do. I don't see that librarians have any very good or sure principle in their choice of books; some of their choices are pretty queer; some excellent books are excluded. And yet plenty of good books get put on the shelves and read till they are worn out. The theory of the matter is still entirely unsettled, and fluctuates between two extremes represented by these two all-too-familiar library dicta: (1) "What's the use of being a librarian if all you do is to hand out trash?" (2) "What is the use of having a library stocked with all the standard 'best quality' books, if you can't get any readers to use them?" The question of whether to buy trash or standard books is no nearer a wise answer. Wise things are said pro and con, up and down, and all around the matter; and nobody arrives at any conclusion except the slippery and unsatisfactory dictum that "excellence is relative." This axiom being about all there is to say on this or any other question reappears in all library talk, and was never more humanely stated than at the very beginning in 1851 by the classically cultivated Bostonian, George Ticknor. Some high-brow of the period objected to the inclusion of trash in free public libraries, and Mr. Ticknor replied that "'trash' is a word which has no definite meaning, any more than the 'freezing point,' which depends entirely on the material to be frozen."

Whatever librarians say as to the pure theory of their job, their working hypothesis is that if the habit of reading can be established, ordinary folks or some

of them, or perhaps their children will little by little climb up the slope towards good books. Whereas, if the reading habit is not established, it is a dead certainty that they will never read good books, because they will never read at all. The same unanswerable question springs up here. Are the idealists right that there is a fighting chance (all anybody needs to make it worth his while to fight), that the majority of readers among ordinary folks can be trained and led to read good and deep books? Or rather if any attention is paid to the taste of the general public isn't it more probable that the ruling taste will become bad? Conservative, backward-looking minds shout out an embittered, cock-sure, "Yes, it *will* become bad," and impede as heartily as they can the attempt to broadcast the stuff out of which taste is grown. Forward-looking minds wonder, speculatively, "Why can't the general taste be improved by exactly the same means on a larger scale which have improved and trained the taste of the few? And anyhow, has the taste of this self-satisfied few ever been more than finicking and narrow? Who supported Shakespeare by steady love and admiration? Not the refined, cultivated élite of his age, but the rabble who crowded into his theater. Who built the Gothic Cathedrals? Not the few delicate-minded poets and litterateurs, but masses and crowds of ordinary folks."

Of course, nobody knows which side is right. It will take a century, perhaps two, to collect sufficient evidence to prove the answer to whichever side is temperamentally averse to believing it. But being human,

we cannot wait for evidence before holding hotly to our opinions. We take sides as naturally as we breathe and as enthusiastically as we eat. Those opposed to the hypothesis that the majority of mankind is worth cultivating are shouting that the spirit of the age is dragging us all up a blind alley in its now more and more apparent insistence on giving a chance for education to everybody. They protest at the top of their voices that they will be no party to such a waste of time, and make themselves as effective brakes as possible against the forward movement. (But that is not very effective.) The faithful lovers and friends of ordinary people who have a mystic faith in their possibilities as the best hope for all of us, are shouting with joy that at last (so they feel) we have set our feet in the right path.

In the vanguard of this tumultuous, inharmonious, energetic advance towards the mystery of the future, march—sure and ardent in the midst of our clouded modern doubt, impecunious in the midst of our stifling parvenu prosperity, the new Franciscans,—the American librarians. Unlike most of us they know where they want to go, and they are on their way.

They are fighting for the privilege of flinging open to all the world the doors of the storehouse of civilization's experience and aspirations, to put in our hands golden treasures of beauty and sadness and hope and resignation and information and fun and philosophy and understanding.

They can do no more. The result depends upon us, the mob.

WOMEN'S CLUBS

It was a handsome building, one of the best in the city. Carved over the door were the words (which would have made my grandmother stare), "Women's City Club."

"How long have you had it?" I asked my guide, as we walked up the flower-bordered path.

"Seventeen years last January," she answered.

We paused under the portico, and through the open door I caught a glimpse of a well-proportioned room, admirable furniture (not too much of it) and vivid paintings on the walls. Above us rose three stories of brick wall, pierced by many large windows.

"Goodness gracious!" I murmured, "where did you ever get money enough to build it? Borrow it? Or did some wealthy person give it outright like a library?" (I had just been shown the beautiful Carnegie Library of the Middle-Western city I was visiting.)

"Neither," answered my guide, leading me in, "neither. We raised the money ourselves. And when we had our house-warming party, we didn't owe a cent."

I was silent, considering this and many other things in the past which had gone to the making of it, for I am old enough to remember very well the days when Women's Study Clubs were rather new things in this country and owned no property. The owning of prop-

erty has its dangers all too familiar to Americans, and I now asked, trying to keep my doubt from showing too obviously in my voice, "And what do you do in it, now you have it?"

"I'll show you what we do," said my guide. And she did.

She showed me first the pleasant room in which we stood, which was the common gathering place. Everything I saw was tasteful, a harmonious part of an agreeable civilized whole. To spend an hour in it would be a lesson in household decoration for any one, and must be a revelation to women of limited experience. The pictures on the walls, forceful moderns, surprised me, and I asked, "Have you money enough to buy such paintings as that, and to keep them renewed? Those must have been painted this year."

I was told, "Oh, no, those don't belong to the Club. We use our walls as an opportunity for artists to show their work to possible buyers. There are so few such chances in American cities; even if there were many art-dealers' galleries (which there aren't) not many ordinary people would venture into them. But everybody in town comes here, at one time or another. Sometimes a person takes a fancy to a picture at sight; sometimes one slowly wins its way after many days or months into a regular visitor's heart. We sell a good many in the course of the year. It's quite a help to artists (we charge no commission) and it provides us always with interesting wall-decorations. A good many Women's Clubs are doing that. It's usually part of the work of the Art Department every Woman's

City Club has. It's always been part of our tradition, you know, to help artists get in touch with ordinary American life. We keep up a steady campaign of urging our members to do their share in supporting creative artists."

She laughed without bitterness, and remarked, philosophically, "Precious little thanks we get for it, too! Women's Clubs are the only organizations of ordinary plain Americans in this country who in large numbers make a persistent effort to provide encouragement and financial backing for artists; and what nasty things they say about us! . . . for that matter, about all mothers-of-families who are trying to lead completer, more civilized lives. They find it pretentious of us. Oh, well, it'll be a long pull, several generations probably, to overcome that prejudice. Perhaps one point is, that in trying to help artists, we are trying to be patrons of art, and artists have always, in all times revenged themselves on their patrons by pointing out that they never understand what art is all about."

She turned, opened a door, and showed me a well-planned auditorium seating five or six hundred people.

"What do you do here?" I asked her, surprised at its size.

This is what she said: "All our semi-public lectures are given here; we have one a week, through the winter, open to the public, with 'speakers of prominence' as the phrase goes. There's a lot of bunk about such speakers and such lectures, however. They seldom amount to anything. Why *will* 'people of prominence' talk down to their plain audiences so? Don't they think

we can see through a mill-stone? But they're good publicity, I suppose . . . everything American has to bow to that!

"Then our Drama Department presents its plays here. The stage is all arranged for acting, dressing rooms, special lighting, the necessary fixings. They give what any 'Little Theater' gives,—Dunsany, Synge, Yeats, and the other Irish playwrights, some of the modern Russians, some Shakespeare, and lots of our own experimenting American playwrights . . . the sort of thing a real theater can't give because it doesn't pay.

"And of course, our Music Department uses it for concerts. Twelve concerts are given regularly, every season,—chamber music, songs, eighteenth-century music—whatever the music clubs are studying that year. The last four or five years, they've been working with the music teaching in the public schools, too, and the annual music-memory prize contest is held here, and a sort of three-day music festival. That's sometimes very good, and sometimes doesn't amount to much, depending on who's on the Committee for that year.

"The League of Women Voters have their instruction classes in government here too, because there are too many of them for one of the smaller rooms upstairs. Once a month they have a sort of open meeting, with the mayor or some city officials speaking to them on the details of their jobs. Some of the State officials too. And afterwards they ask questions. That's usually quite lively. I've seen many an official collar wilt to a string before the questioning was over.

"The Public Health Department of our Club has its meetings here too, and once a month they have a public meeting with a doctor or a matron from a hospital or a district nurse, or some such official to make a report on their work.

"And the Current Events Club, of course, and all the entertainments any of us give to make money to help along some good cause."

I didn't see how any more meetings could possibly be held in any one assembly-room and stopped her to ask what were those smallish rooms, each with a table, which I had noticed opening off from the hall.

"Committee rooms," she explained. "Of course, it takes a lot of work to run all that goes on here, and we have a great many committees. But let me show you our domestic science laboratory where we have our cooking-classes and lecture-rooms."

We saw that gleaming work-room and after it, on the floor above, a series of well-lighted rooms, each large enough to hold thirty or forty chairs, the regular meeting rooms for the various study clubs which meet in the building.

"What do they study?" I asked, thinking of the unlettered grandmothers of the women who met there to learn.

"Oh, everything," said my guide, carelessly, and then with a laugh, "or rather anything they're interested in."

"Science?" I asked. "Chemistry? Physics? Mechanics? Mathematics? Biology? Botany?"

"No, practically no abstract sciences. I don't know

why. Probably better for us if we did. But they are not in our tradition. I don't know where the tradition comes from, but there it is . . . our subjects are only those more or less connected with the humanities."

"What do you mean, humanities? Latin? Greek?"

"No, I suppose I mean *belles lettres*. No, not that either. I tell you . . . the subject chosen is always something directly connected with personal human life. Those seem to be the subjects women turn to when they're free to choose. Literature, geography, history, hygiene, art, politics, home-decoration, theory of government. Here's a list of the subjects taken up this year by the different study clubs meeting here."

My eye ran over it. "Egypt"—"Vitamines for Growing Children"—"The Art of Spain"—"History of the Public-School Movement"—"Saint Gaudens and his Work"—"Iceland, the land, the people, the history"—"Mrs. Wharton's Novels"—"The League of Nations and International Relations"—"Italian Primitive Painting"—"Law as it Affects Women"—"French Literature of the Late Eighteenth Century"—"The Greek Epic"—"Modern Novels"—"Is the Primary worth the trouble?"

She began at this point to tell me something of the civic activities of the Club, of their effort to better living conditions in their town, and I listened open-mouthed with admiration for their energy, their high-spirited refusal to resign themselves to what has always been called "the inevitable." But my subject for the time being only what they were doing for self-education, I was obliged to cut short this epic-in-the-

making, not, however, before noting the persistence even in political activities of the early tradition of informing their minds.

Their "Americanization work" for instance, upon which my eye lit with an instant suspicion of provincial ignorance and condescension—what was a large part of it, do you suppose? A number of carefully planned programs of study, with excellent bibliographies. What were they to study? Any smart New Yorker with his certainty that small-town self-educating women are always pretentious and complacent would have assumed that they studied how to bring the poor ignorant foreigner up to our high American level. It would have been a blow to such a scorner to see that the programs of study were planned to steer those American women into a respectful knowledge of the civilization, literature, art, history and general temperament of the countries from which our foreigners come. The intention is plainly to give them some notion of what a foreigner's nation, the best of his nation, represents in the world, before any attempt is made to help him adapt himself to his new surroundings.

part of the program
These programs of study came from the General Federation headquarters along with innumerable others, on all sorts of subjects, with bibliographies adapted to the use of clubs with good library facilities, with poor, with none at all. They are sent out broadcast all over the country. It is impossible of course to obtain any statistical proof of how seriously they are followed. But as to the programs themselves, they

represent honest, careful thinking on the part of mature, intellectually responsible brains. I caught not a cheap or ignorant note in any one of them. I climbed down from my suspicious perch once more, making to myself again, as I had so many times before, the reflection that one reason why such strange things are said of Women's Clubs by Americans outside of them, is that we have not the slightest idea what they are really doing.

Just here, a crisp young woman came tripping up the stairs with a message for my mentor who exclaimed over a forgetfulness of hers . . . "Yes, of *course!* I ought to have telephoned earlier." To me she said, "Excuse me just a moment, will you please? I'm chairman of the Music Committee and I find that . . ." she was half down the stairs, leaving a trail over her shoulder of "Mrs. Freen's recital . . . tuning the piano . . . back in a moment, so sorry to leave you . . ."

I was glad to be left, glad to have a chance to collect my thoughts and set them in order. My mind was cram-jam full of ideas which had been springing up almost with each word of my guide. She herself found all that she showed me quite natural, quite to be expected. But fresh from a year's residence in France, I could not take it so much as a matter of course. Where *did* Women's Clubs start from, anyhow, I wondered. What made them begin? They have grown up in our midst as a tree grows, as any native product of the soil shoots up, so naturally that we have become

accustomed to them without realizing that they have not always been there.

A wise saying of R. H. Tawney came into my mind at this, an aphorism which runs, profoundly and neatly, "The achievements of education are to be measured by its success in *assisting growth*, not in imposing discipline or imparting information." If everybody who looked into the history of Women's Clubs would learn that excellent aphorism, we might understand something more of their meaning.

And yet, even that sound formula would not get you ahead very fast in discovering what the facts are. For I had been trying for some time to look into the history of Women's Clubs, and had found it, for the most part, still in the oral state. Curiously little intelligent outside attention has been paid to this new "folk way" which has sprung up out of the American soil, not from any of the familiar old seeds of English or European custom which have produced most of our national ways. If in any other country in the world a spontaneous movement, directed towards mental self-improvement, *not connected with the money-making instinct*, had grown in forty years from a few hundred members to three millions, historians and scholars of all sorts would have clustered thick about it, studying out its causes and trying to understand its meaning. But if, in the United States, any intelligent unbiased historian, philosopher, or anthropologist has ever given to the phenomenon of three million members of women's clubs half an hour of the same serious, open-

minded study given by such students to the marriage customs of Patagonia . . . I have never heard of it.

There are plenty of obvious reasons for this. For one thing there is the natural inability to see that one's own folk-ways may be as significant and picturesque as other people's. Another reason may be that same old hostility to more widespread enlightenment we have already seen existing in the mind of a certain kind of cultivated person, the traditional feeling that "culture" is the sacred emblem of the tribe, shown only to those few initiates who have learned the secret passwords which let them into the culture-chief's lodge. It is to be remembered that among primitive people, the secret and sacred tribal emblem is never shown to women. Such opposers of popular education of any kind seem to have an uneasy feeling that there is only so much education to be had, and if everybody has a little, there will be less of it left for the class (to which they always belong) which is accustomed to have a great deal. The element of exclusiveness too is doubtless a factor, the element which fills the pockets of fashion designers, and empties the pockets of those who think they can buy originality.

There is, in addition to this traditional snobbery of culture always encountered when a new class tries to work its way up in the scale of intelligence, the natural human dislike on the part of men to see their superiority diminished. American men seem to me to have far less than most men of this understandable impulse of self-protection. As far as they have understood the meaning of their women's attempt to amount

to more as human beings, American fathers, husbands and brothers have been astonishingly magnanimous in their attitude. I often think that the friendliness felt by American women for their men (apparently they are the only women in the world who have any real *liking* for men in general) is based upon a more or less conscious appreciation of this generosity. But forty years ago there were plenty of men (like some still living) who did not in the least understand what their women were driving at. Their first, all-too-human impulse was to laugh at what they did not understand. Well, the first women's clubs were often very laughable spectacles . . . if you are the kind of person who feels inclined to laugh rather than weep over such sights.

But probably the biggest reason for the absence of any attempt at serious comment or even observation on the part of professionally trained American intelligence is the fact that the Women's Club movement is only one phase of the democratic movement. That movement, though still in its infancy, is so vast in mere size (if in nothing else) that philosophers, historians, anthropologists and the rest of the learned gentry have not invented any calipers wherewith to take its measures.

And lastly, I reflected, there are few definite, trustworthy statistics about what Women's Clubs have accomplished and no "documents" at all, such as any sound scholar insists upon having before he is willing to treat a subject. But this consideration did not turn me back from my attempt to make a guess at the meaning of this large feature in the American land-

scape, for I am not a sound scholar, have no learned dignity to maintain, feel myself not in the least bound by their cautious traditions of literal accuracy. I have few documents at my disposal,—true—but as I looked back over what I have actually seen of Women's Clubs, I found in my mind a considerable deposit of the sort of first-hand information about a "movement" which soaks into the pores of anybody who has lived alongside it for most of his life.

The fact which first sprang up as significant to my thought was the background against which Women's Clubs came into being. Without knowing what lies back of them, and where they started, how can we estimate how far they have come, or how straight, or how rapidly?

In 1850 and thereabouts, American women of the working-classes and those of the remaining frontier communities were still attached to that deepest of all tap-roots of life, material physical necessity. Their days were crammed with life-creating work as doubt-free as that of shipwrecked mariners fighting for their lives. Far at the other end of the social scale, in the older communities there were a very few American women freed by prosperity from material labor and at the same time, through some personal eccentricity of their fathers, allowed to take a few steps towards civilized intellectual life.

Between those two varieties were the American middle-class women, still shut hermetically into their homes, body, soul and mind, by a fixed public opinion which had grown used to seeing them there when they

were needed there. From these women (so rapidly that apparently neither they nor their contemporaries were quick enough to see that the trick had been turned) an industrial society and a system of public schools had snatched away three-fourths of all the occupations which had formerly filled their lives and made those lives worth the bother of living.

Don't say you know all this already and are sick and tired of hearing it said again. We say it over and over,—true—but we later generations never imaginatively feel upon our shoulders the leaden mantle of the grim self-righteous public opinion which forbade those women to try to adjust themselves to the new world into which they were born. For us it is like a detective or adventure story of which we knew the end . . . hence savorless. We know well enough the latter part of the story of those grandmothers of ours. We know that they did not (at least not all of them) suffocate in the Black Hole. We have so few illusions about the world into which they have emerged, where they now stand along with everybody else, that we are inclined to belittle the exploit of their escape. In fact, considering all the miseries of our fumbling, blundering modern society we seem to be in rather a Black Hole ourselves with the air none too stimulating, with very slim chances of ever getting out.

And we are. That is the very reason why it may be worth our while to look at the means of escape which was invented by a sizable group among us, bone of our American bone, flesh of our flesh. There may perhaps be an idea in it for us, suited to our climate,

to our temperament. We are the only large nation—aren't we?—in which material prosperity has brought up to self-conscious existence vast numbers from out the class, traditionally helpless and hopeless, known as "the masses." If they do not develop in a healthy way into reasonably healthy mental and moral life, the nation will be submerged beneath their mere numbers. Nothing can ever be done for anybody from the outside. Whatever is done for them, they must do for themselves. That was precisely the situation of the American middle-class married woman of two generations ago. What did she do for herself?

Whatever may be said by academically trained critics as to what was actually accomplished by those American women trying to break out of their comfortable airless prisons of tepid uselessness, there can be no doubt about what their intention was—a conscious, humble-minded recognition of their own ignorance, and a living, moving desire to amount to more as individuals, intellectually and esthetically. There can also be no doubt that this was the first time that such an intention ever entered the heads of so large a number of ordinary people. Just as the Correspondence Schools and the public libraries are not isolated facts but corollaries of the democratic movement, so are Women's Clubs part of the same rise in the masses of an attempt to share not only the material comforts of life, but also the artistic and intellectual goods of existence of which they had never before been even conscious.

And, if we are honest, we encounter here, as we do

with every such manifestation of democracy, the hooded specter, the unanswered question, "Will they learn how to share those artistic and intellectual goods and by sharing them enlarge them? Or will they by misunderstanding them, merely coarsen and spoil them?" Since that is a question new in the history of the world, only time can give us the answer.

American middle-class married women were thus the first moderns to encounter in *large numbers*, the perilous conditions which probably lie ahead of us all in a competently functioning half-way intelligently run industrial society:—the disappearance of enforced and absorbing occupation; physical safety which removes the excitement and stimulus of physical risk; and, most dangerous of all, the possession of that sharpest of two-edged swords, leisure time.

The first phase of the encounter of American women with those new conditions seems to have been one of almost complete prostration on the part of the women. From the safe distance at which I looked back at them, the first generation of women in these conditions seemed to me like people who have been hit on the head and do not know what hit them. They did not know what the matter was, nor indeed that anything was the matter. They only did not know what to do with themselves in those dreadful "homes," emptied by offices of their husbands, by schools of their children, and by factories of their traditional vital occupations. The dignity of real usefulness, the maturity of real experience were cut off from them by a new economic organization of life; and public opinion,

although still insisting that public morality demanded that they should contentedly remain worthless dependents, saw very clearly that they were, and treated them as such, with disrespect and indignity.

In the matter of money, the custom of the middle-class home was to treat the mother of the family like a half-wit or an irresponsible child. She was obliged to ask the father of the family for every penny she had, and to account to him for every penny she spent. It was his duty, as the all-wise source of good judgment, to prevent her, by severity, satiric mockery and minute supervision, from spending it like a fool. "Spending it like a fool" meant spending it in any way which did not occur to him at the moment he thought about it as desirable or necessary. She must not only accept in fact this absolute authority of her husband's whim about all expenditures, even those for the children's welfare and for the common household expenses, but she must not breathe or even think a protest against it, under pain of being "unwomanly," a word having about the same social implications in those days as "bolshevist" had a few years ago. (Of course, in any general statement on human beings, there are individual exceptions to be made. The description here given applies to the majority.) Always, everywhere in history, any régime of absolute authority of one human being over another, has produced the same results,—broken-spirited abjectness on the part of the weak, remarkably competent deceit on the part of the unscrupulous and ingenious, and ugly raging revolt on the part of the strong and honest. The traditional effects

were forthcoming among our grandmothers, if one can judge by their intimate stories of the family life of their youth. Women who most nearly by nature approached the desired type of worthless dependents, fared of course best and suffered least in being reduced to spineless submission. Others, driven to cynical disregard of honor and personal integrity, used in lawful marriage the wiles which female slaves have always used to get what they want out of their masters; and a small number of the strong . . . true daughters of their high-hearted, independent, frontier-stock American fathers . . . flung themselves against their bars in the disagreeable, exaggerated, unbecoming, humorless attitudes always taken by genuine despair. These became "mannish women's righters."

Married women were not only forbidden any adult part in the economics of their home, they were forbidden any adult intellectual life. The children, their own children, were all in school. But mothers must not know anything or do anything about the schools, because that would be partaking of political life, and that would be unwomanly. Their children were often sick (the death-rate was appalling), but they must not try to understand anything about sickness or health, because that would be studying medicine and nothing would be more horridly unwomanly than that! Sometimes their sons went to college, but their mothers must not try even in thought to follow and share in college life, because that would be to try to be "learned," and "men do not like women who know too much." Their husbands read the newspapers and

talked to other men about the Franco-Prussian War and what was happening in the California goldfields and in South America, but their wives must not have opinions on anything outside the house, because their opinions could be nothing but childish. Literally and physically, the only steps they ever took outside their homes, unsupervised by their families, were to the sewing circle of their church, or to the meeting of the Missionary Society. Those few who were naturally religious or mystic devoted themselves to church services of various kinds, and intensive home devotions. The others used the church as the only roundabout outlet into the world open to them.

The factories did all their manufacturing for them; the schools did the education; their husbands did the thinking; and the "hired girl" did the work; and those grown women, potentially powerful daughters of mighty pioneer parents, slowly starving and suffocating, were told to thank God for their safe, sheltered lives.

What did they do? For about a generation they languished. They enjoyed (tight corsets, frequent child-bearing, no outdoor exercise, and total ignorance of hygiene contributing) the worst health any generation of American women has known. They did not die off like flies and rest in the grave as the earlier generations of seventeenth-century American women did. They lingered on, nervous invalids, with all the consequent horrors to themselves and every one else. Nobody expected an American married woman of the middle-class, of the sort who kept a "hired girl," to

be strong, vigorous, and alert. She was professionally an invalid. The sweet-faced, pale-cheeked mother, lying on the couch, suffering silent agonies of pain (and ignorant as an imbecile of active real life), was the right sort of mother to have, the kind you felt proud to show your friends. Her delicacy was a proof of her refinement. You bragged about her complicated ailments, and so did she, swopping hideous stories with her equally ailing neighbor.

There are less than no statistics bearing on the matter, but as I looked back into my own family history and thought of the dates of new openings for women, the Civil War seems to have been the force, which raised sweet-faced, pale-cheeked, dog-ignorant Mother from her invalid couch and set her on her feet. Of course, it was the lives of unmarried women that saw the most dramatic changes. It was during and immediately after the Civil War that unmarried women began to be librarians, began far more universally than before and with a more recognized status to be school-teachers and to form organizations of "lady teachers," began, a few of them, to study medicine and to make of nursing something more than a business for the Sairy Gamps of the world. And for married women? Well, the dates for the first women's clubs run from 1866 on . . . and very rapidly on.

Twelve years from that time, women's study clubs were being formed everywhere. They sprang up by spontaneous generation, apparently; always with the same membership, married women of the social class that kept one hired girl and enjoyed delicate health.

Timidly, under a hot fire of mockery and disapproval, without a single sympathetic voice raised, such women crept out of their homes once a week or twice a month, and gathered together to read papers to each other on such carefully noncontroversial subjects as "The History of Holland" and "Raphael's Madonnas." It was little enough, in the way of intellectual life, Heaven knows. But apparently it was enough to keep the breath of intellectual life in the lungs of those American women.

Twenty-one years from the date of the very earliest club, Mother rather tremulous with excitement, repeating under her breath the newly learned Parliamentary rules of order, was on the railway train, all alone, leaving her family behind her for an eternity of three or four days, going to New York. And not to see what was the fashion in bonnets or to consult a new specialist about her aching back, but as delegate from her club to the meeting which became the first convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. There were sixty-one delegates at this first meeting and it is a safe guess that few of them had ever been away from home before, except on a family errand. There were women there representing the North, South, East and West of the United States. Mother, who had never seen any other women than her next-door neighbors and the members of her church, nor ever talked to them about anything more than children's or women's diseases and town gossip, was meeting women from all over the country and talking with them about how to amount to more as human beings, how to escape from

the narrowness of their own personalities into the civilized impersonal world of thought.

A woman who was present wrote of this meeting: "It was a revelation of a new force in womanhood . . . the opening of the doors and windows of souls and consequent light and sunshine flowing in upon other minds and souls . . . the most wonderful of gatherings." Many of these grown, married women were moved to tears of joy at the opening before them of a more human life, in which they would no longer need to suppress and hide what was strongest and truest in them—their desire to grow, to mature, to make something worthwhile of themselves.

At the next meeting, there were sixty-three delegates representing seventeen states. And two years after that, in 1893, there were two hundred and ninety-seven, representing twenty-nine states. They were a little dizzy and scared by their rapid growth, which seemed almost "unwomanly." But nobody paid any special attention to them, beyond the barber-shop jibing to which they were humbly accustomed as the usual tribute paid to woman-on-a-pedestal. Nobody in fact seemed to notice how fast their numbers were growing. Eight years after their first "big" meeting, with two hundred and ninety-seven delegates, the General Federation of Women's Clubs had a membership of 720,000 "mothers." And now they have two millions. Can you beat it for astonishingness? You cannot.

I cannot think of any historical movement to which I can compare this spontaneous turning of American married women towards study. (No, there is no rule

against unmarried women in women's clubs, and there are always a few such members, but the overwhelming majority are wives and mothers living at home, with no outside occupation. The tribal way seems so to have ordained the matter.) These astonishing figures,—two million in forty years—make it look like a Crusade,—like one of the great historic waves of sudden new feeling sweeping over a country. But this seems to have been vastly more spontaneous, less engineered by outside agents than the Crusades, which were loudly campaigned for by the most eloquent public speakers of the time, and for political and economic reasons were secretly as well as openly pushed by the rulers of the times. Every medieval knight who went Crusading was in fashion, adorned with the dazzling halo of doing what is the thing to do. But no such halo gilded the first Mothers who, shamefaced at their own daring, quitted their invalid couches, and, avoiding notice as much as they could, stole out to the meetings of their women's club to try to learn something. They were the subject of all the caustic comments of the cracker-box wits. "Mother wanting to know something about Egyptian Art, or what's-his-name's Faust!"

Inside many a home, Father laughed too; Father who had been to college and graduated with pretty good marks and who had at one time known enough about Latin and mathematics to pass his exams, Father the really educated, laughed whole-heartedly at the latest funny notion of little wifie. Wifie pretending to study history and art! Had they studied history or art in his college, where it really could have been done? They

had not dreamed of such a thing! And look at the magnificent race of American citizens they had turned out. At the supper table, Father enjoyed drawing Mother out to tell about what her club had been "studying," and then pouncing upon her inevitable ignorant mistakes, rejoiced to hold her up to the ridicule of the children or guests:—"The blood of the old Norse, viking in his veins, eh?" Thought 'viking' was a verb, did she? And pretending to study history!" "Oh, listen to the Woman's-Club girl-graduate . . . 'a sweat-shop is a Turkish bath!' Ha! Ha! What'll women think up next!"

What could have given those first unlettered, unled, unhelped ignorant women the courage to begin and to go on, year after year, in the face of such opposition and ridicule? It is amazing. Could there be a more tried-in-the-furnace evidence of an instinctive desire for education in the native American heart than the birth and enormous growth of the Women's Club movement?

The evidence does not yet prove a capacity of the American character to become educated. This is a different matter. Since nothing whatever is known about it as yet there seems little reason for the cocksure certainty of the enemies of democracy that most people can never become educated;—no reason, that is, except the natural reflex of panic which everybody feels at the sight of an immense mass of anything on its way. It is a century or two too soon to have real evidence as yet on either side. But in the face of the two million members of the General Federation of Women's ;

Clubs, and probably a million more in other organizations of women not connected with the National organization, it seems to me that there is plenty of proof that the *desire* to become educated can be counted upon in a great number of ordinary American people, if they are freed from material anxiety about where the next meal is coming from.

In spite of the traditional, feminine love for social life, the clubs those American women invented as escapes from too-restricted, too-personal lives were not social organizations, but study clubs. In spite of early and determined attempts on the part of socially ambitious women among them to use their clubs as tools for social exclusiveness, as a means to assert class superiority, the clubs have remained steadily, on the whole, means to intellectual activity, not to social advancement. What social exclusiveness they ever had, under the influence of conventional ideas of a generation or so ago, is melting away, as it becomes more and more apparent that their motive power is the flood-tide of democratic feeling.

An interesting comparison is to be made between Negro education and women's study clubs. After the Civil War a great deal of Northern sympathy, money, and intelligent, trained leadership, was sent South to help educate the Negro ex-slaves. A few men who understood what education is, found it not beneath their dignity to make a creative effort to invent an education suitable to an illiterate race emerging from slavery. The middle-class American women, spontaneously risen to try to free themselves from ignorance and narrow-

ness, never received, so far as I have been able to find out, half-a-minute's serious attention from any educator worth the name. It would have been considered barbaric to laugh at the spectacle of a strong, middle-aged, serious-minded Negro, painfully spelling out lessons he should have had a chance to learn in his youth. But everybody laughed, and loudly, over the piteous spectacle presented by middle-aged, free, white women, stumbling and fumbling their way towards education, taking the wrong paths, losing themselves in the brambles, thinking they were advancing when they were going around in a circle, not knowing where to find the right books, not having the right books available, never having heard of the right books, trying ignorantly and heart-breakingly to study conic sections before they knew algebra. Odd, is it not, that not one professional educator moved out of his tracks to try to set straight this army of humble, willing students, the grade of whose intelligence was so vitally important to the nation?

Well, it may have been the salvation of the movement, this total neglect by professional educators. They make plenty of mistakes of their own, and many of them have almost as queer ideas of what "education" is, as the early Women's Clubs. They get a theory and hang hard to it all their lives, though experience may prove it to be based on quite a false idea of human nature. Above all, professional educators usually succeed in smothering out the one living spark without which education is impossible, the spark of spontaneous interest and intellectual curiosity. It seems very hard

for educators to invent any "system" of learning which does not kill that spark of life pretty quickly. And when that is gone, there is nothing to do but wait for the next generation to come along and try to do better with it. This spark of life is as glowing as ever in Women's Clubs. Laugh as the scornful may at the occasional heterogeneous mixture in their programs, and at the lack of continuity, the element of spontaneity and intellectual curiosity is very much alive.

When one of those early Women's Clubs held its annual meeting to decide what they would "study" the next year, no outside considerations weighed on them, nor does it now; no question of fashion (which hog-ties nearly all human movements); no question of authority from the outside, for the individual Women's Club has never acknowledged the slightest authority from outside; no sense of competition (strange, unnatural as that seems for Americans), no thought about "how to get ahead" of another club; no "standardized" next step on the organized treadmill. Such souls and minds as they had were quite free as souls and minds seldom are, as they turned their eyes here and there upon the riches of the world. Should they "study" navigation on Chinese rivers, or the "Condition of Women in the Roman Empire," or "Our Birds," or the "Poetry of Martin Tupper"? They chose whatever beckoned to them, and to the accompaniment of hoots and jeers proceeded to the shelf on which the Encyclopedia stood. What was there so very, very funny, I wonder, about the sedulous reading of the Encyclopedia by those early club women? What's the matter

with the Encyclopedia? The groans of the onlookers of that period would have made anybody think that the Encyclopedia was an utterly discredited patent-medicine fraud. It is, though dry, incomplete, and uneven in quality, the most reliable source of condensed information we have, written by the best scholars of the world. What's the joke about reading it? "Reading up a subject in the Encyclopedia" does not make one as ripe a scholar as spending years of one's life in the British Museum or the Bibliothèque Nationale, consulting original documents,—and no one pretends that it does. But it gets you as far as most of the books studied by the undergraduates in college since it is for the most part written by the scholars who write those text-books, or as most of the lectures delivered by a university professor. In any case, how can anybody of that time have failed to see the thrilling new world opened by the Encyclopedia to a woman who has never read anything but the cookbook, Godey's "Lady's Book," and the missionary society leaflets?

How under the sun did women brought up as they had been, have enough gray matter left alive, to *wish* to go to the Encyclopedia, read what they found there about such a topic as "Renaissance Art" or "Oliver Cromwell," and then think about it enough to "write a paper" on it? Nobody asked them to, or expected them to,—quite the contrary. So they had not the all-powerful incentive of "coming up to what is expected" which seems to be the motive power of about half of our usual actions. The other half seems to spring from the instinct to do what has been done in the past,

without much thought as to its value. But these new clubwomen were not leaning on the comfortable staff of tradition,—again, quite the contrary. Before their time no ordinary women of their sort had even tried to have any information on matters outside their personal lives. To this day, in Europe and the British Isles, it is considered incongruous and socially grotesque for well-to-do married women to attempt openly to learn more than they know on their wedding days. If a mother of a family wishes to “study,” she must keep it dark or be laughed at. No, our American club women were not following a European model. They seem—hard as it is for moderns to admit of respectable, middle-class women—they seem to have conceived a new idea, all their own, conceived that if they knew more, they would amount to more. It was without the slightest help from any member of those “upper” or “intellectual” classes which naïvely claim the professional monopoly of ideas. Confronted with the challenge of leisure time, two millions among the daughters of our pioneers did not devote themselves to elaborate clothes, or fishing, or contemplation, or card-playing, or religious ritual, or multiplied love-affairs, all of them traditional human methods for dealing with leisure time. No, with an amazingly common instinct, this great number of them turned towards as much intellectual life as they knew how to get. From the standpoint of Santayana or Einstein, it was not very intellectual. Few things are. My astonishment comes from its being as intellectual in intention as it was. Why was it intellectual at all? To look

back at them, lying feebly on their genteel invalid couches, admired and approved for their feebleness, with their tatting and their gossip and their Godey's "Lady's Book" for mental occupation, who could ever dream that they would claw their way out of their prison, bare-handed as they did? The impulse which kept them at this effort towards intellectual life must have been inner, for there is no trace of any outside influence helping them; disinterested as to material profit or credit for themselves, for they were never praised for it; and it must have been immensely strong, vital, and widespread.

How else can you account for the spread of this movement for mental self-improvement, among mature women everywhere, at the same period, without the use of any of the mechanical means usually necessary to launch a widespread popular movement.

No leaders. That is impossible, isn't it? Every popular movement has always depended on leaders, silver-tongued, magnetic, powerful, fanatically over-certain of their case in order to counterbalance the dead weight of natural human inertia. Right through history we see them, don't we? Well, in the beginning of the Women's Club movement, although there were a few well-trained, active, big-brained women who created the formal framework of the national organization, they did not dream of undertaking any campaigning up and down the land to push the idea. As the movement grew they steered it, but they had little to do with making it grow. No central bureau sent out powerful personalities to persuade women in small

towns to turn away from gossip and intensive house-keeping and to try to think about Art and Literature and Current Events. They persuaded themselves.

We have seen that there were no foreign examples to copy. Less than none. The Women's Club is as native to our soil as the sugar maple and the Ford car.

1 No standardization. Here is one huge, very much alive American activity which is not and never has been respectful of the great American principle of having everything like everything else. There is the wildest, most enlivening individuality among those millions of club members. Each club in the country studies the subject which seems interesting to it, without any impulse to copy another group. The only common rule they seem to have is to meet during nine months of the year and take a vacation during three months.

2 No publicity as a help to start the movement. None. Incredible, isn't it, to an American mind? But a fact. Into the minds of those adult human beings had been ground the axiom that decent married women should be neither seen nor heard by any one outside their own homes, should, even if physically outside the walls of their houses, manage to create a little portable harem in which they should be invisible to any one but their own families. Far from trying to spread abroad the news of their own doings, they shut out reporters and fought against newspaper notices in a shockingly un-American manner. No less a person than Mrs. Julia Ward Howe stated at the first general convention in 1880 that "the club is a larger home, and we wish to have the immunities and defenses of home,

and therefore do not wish the public present, even by its attorney, the reporter."

I hope you notice the ingenious cunning of the old lady . . . "the club is a larger home," forsooth! Using that phrase to take the cuss off the iniquity of married women's presuming to have a life of their own, even for a couple of hours once a fortnight. Perhaps it was not conscious cunning. Perhaps they really did not understand what they were doing. Few people do. Especially when they are being lifted up and carried forward by a ground swell coming from mid-ocean. For of course, that was the invisible motive power which, all over this country, brought Mother up from her own genteel brand of slavery into the variety we all enjoy. The millions and millions of members of Women's Clubs both Federated and independent are a manifestation of it, not a cause of it. But they form a reasonably valid proof of its existence.

The ground swell of our time is the idea of the potential value to society of every individual if properly trained and developed. Furthermore with machines doing so much of the dull and dirty work of life, it seems less necessary than in earlier ages to limit that idea by keeping a certain number of individuals undeveloped so they won't mind doing the dull and dirty work. Of course, women being individuals,—even married women, this advancing idea caught them up as it swept forward. It could not afford to leave them there, passive obstructions to the wider spread of education, sodden in their stuffy, sheltered, uninformed homes. Unless they were at least aware of the need for more

intellectual life, the next generation would not have a fair chance. Their daughters must have more schooling; their sons must have more respect for women's minds as well as for their reputations, if the democratic ideal were to go on struggling for realization. They might make funny mistakes at the beginning in their so-called "study," and think that a "bucket-shop" was a place where pails were sold, but their minds would make a very different background to their children's lives from the one their mothers had provided for them. Unlike those mothers, they would find it natural for their daughters to go to college and to be economically independent; their grown-up sons would not as a matter of course hunt out illiterate and childish girls to marry; and their collective descendants, the whole next generation of club-women, would know all about vikings and bucket-shops as a matter of course; and also, as a matter of course, would expect to go on studying (as in fact they do) more coherently on subjects chosen less childishly at random, subjects more native to the American quality of their minds. Especially would they turn their minds accustomed now to the idea of trying to understand and control their destinies, upon the attempt to understand something about the nature of government. The League of Women Voters, one of the biggest, most systematically and intelligently organized attempts at self-education on a vital subject in this country, with genuine standards of consecutive study, with a perfectly competent idea of what learning means, is only the granddaughter of the first Women's Club with its feeble papers on Tenny-

son's poetry and Landseer's paintings. The realization of an idea proceeds by generations rather than individuals, and this is not such a bad record, taking it by generations.

The American women who raised the money to construct these modern handsome Club-homes, who now finance and run the complicated, well-organized life that goes on inside them are the daughters of Mother who could not keep her own household accounts because she was too womanly to add up a column of figures. And what had I found them doing in that building? Did they sit around the fire and smoke and tell stories or play pool? No, I perceived that to the desolation of easy-going amusement-seekers, and to the alarm of those who hate to have any one but themselves aware of the existence of culture, they are proceeding on their serious-minded, self-educating way, faster and more energetically than ever. They are no longer timid abashed strangers in the world of mental activities. Their mothers saw to it that they had a better education than the generation of women before them, and they know their way around now, know how to use libraries (and how to set to work to force their community to create a library if there isn't one at hand), understand the value of professionally trained leaders for their study classes, and how to get hold of them when needed from the nearest institution of learning. The coöperation between colleges, universities and Women's Clubs is getting closer and closer, but always with the free, almost amusingly independent, flexible, unstandardized tradition which Women's Clubs alone

among big American movements have created and maintained. They not only provide classes for all sorts of study for themselves and for their daughters, but for the daughters and granddaughters of the woman who was Mother's hired girl. They have well-outfitted small stages for the concerts and plays which are one result of their classes in music-study and the drama; and they have well-equipped rooms for the teaching of domestic "science" . . . apparently never any other sort of science. The mark of "culture" put upon them by their founders (culture in the sense of the study of the humanities), still remains, with the exception of a constantly growing interest in the study of government and practical politics.

It is true that Women's Clubs have a good many lively and often elaborate teas and receptions and entertainments as a part of their annual program; and a prodigious amount of "dressing up" in the prodigiously smart, machine-made clothes, so competently produced by American ready-made-clothes factories, and so competently forced upon all our backs by American advertising experts. But contrary to what would have been expected by any able-minded cynic, even by any ordinary observer of the way human affairs usually develop—in spite of their prosperity, the social side of their club life has not, little by little, usurped the leading place. They still expect and demand from their clubs intellectual stimulus and food for intellectual growth—if it is no more than "something new to think about," in the picturesque and significant phrase which one occasionally hears used by an American

club-woman. Whatever may be thought by professional educators about the quality of this intellectual food, the fact that they wish for it, and try for it, and get some of it, sets them apart from all women of their class in other countries, and from most other grown-ups in their own. *They still wish to go on learning!* They still present that rarest of spectacles—well-dressed, well-to-do, mature people who are not entirely satisfied with themselves, with humility of mind enough to admit that they need more education than they have, with every intention of trying to get it. Almost without exception the educational activities of well-dressed, well-to-do, mature people are limited to trying to force intellectual growth upon some other class. "How," they ask themselves, public-spiritedly, in mass-meetings and committee meetings, "can we get more of the benefits of education into the lives of foreigners, illiterates, 'the working-classes'?" I know of no other large number of prosperous, automobile-owning people who, like the three million members of Women's Clubs say earnestly, "We ourselves need more education. Let's plan to keep after it."

It is this spirit which reassures me on the occasions when anxious self-appointed guardians of good taste and cultural integrity cry out that half-baked half-education is the result of women's study clubs. Remember where they started, with no education at all. Half-education is dangerous only for those who think it is complete. If you are still on your way . . . ! And where are we, any of us, but still on our way? You can't arrive at any destination all at once, no matter

what your pace. You must pass the half-way mark sometime. Why should it be taken for granted that to arrive half-way is sure to make people think there is no more to be done? Can it be any worse to be half-way than not to have started?

But how about the traditional awfulness of the naturally pretentious woman who thinks when she has read an article in the Encyclopedia that she is a ripe scholar? She is certainly very awful indeed, but I have faith enough in the vitality of ripe scholarship to feel that there is little danger of her hurting anybody but herself by her foolishness. And would the world be any better if she were pretentious over nothing rather than over little? Over living in a house with a bow-window (as her grandmother was) rather than over knowing that Bakst is an artist and not a Soviet leader? No power on earth can eliminate pretentious people. No force can prevent people capable of cheap pretentiousness from pretending cheaply . . . not even sacred, picturesque illiteracy. Take her at her worst, if her half-baked half-education puts better books and pictures into her home and into her children's hands than she had, they may very well be one step ahead of her in the long slow pull towards a civilized mind. The founder of the line of the Medici was a hard-fisted philistine banker, who was doubtless sneered at by the delicate artistic temperaments of his day for his pretentiousness in trying to introduce art as an element in the life and education of that inheritor of crassly materialistic traditions, his son, Cosimo.

In any case the risk of thinking you have arrived

when you have only started, is no specialty of American Women's Clubs. It is a danger inherent in every human attempt to progress and learn anything new.

What is going to happen now? During the last half-century, middle-class married women were called upon to manufacture neither in nor out of their homes, and hence formed the leisure-class of a country passionately given over to manufacturing. We are now told that this fifty-year vacation was an oversight, and that the roaring tide of commercial efficiency will soon sweep them into money-making along with all other adults, because none can be spared if the sacred banner of material prosperity is to wave on high. What will happen to Women's Clubs? When all women have daily office hours will the study classrooms and the auditoriums of their Club buildings be deserted?

Will women too take to golf?

Or will they go on trying to learn something?

PARENTS AS STUDENTS

THE spectacle made of himself by any human being of any age or class who is learning something new can be endured without laughter or without bitterness only by very big-souled people or very wise ones. Did you ever see any one learning to skate? Why is it that learners of that art would do anything to avoid spectators on the ice? Did the man ever live who as a boy did not look a fool when ordering his first meal in a restaurant? Let your memory's ear call up the anguish caused by some one who is learning to play the violin. Or the French horn which must have so many years of human life poured into it before it produces a decent tone. And as for the man who is trying to learn to be an author, it is kinder not even to mention him.

No matter who he is, how expert and finished and elegant in another line, the learner of something new is always a sorry sight to the eye experienced and finished in that line. The magnificent Wagnerian basso, master of his art, who is trying to learn to drive his own car is either an exasperating or a hilarious spectacle to the garage-man. The mechanic's heart-felt cry of "Gosh! Wouldn't you think any fool would know better than that!" soars up from the unregenerate human heart the world around, as it contemplates its learning fellows.

Everybody, even the humblest, has felt this amazed

scorn of somebody else who is trying to learn what he already knows; and consequently everybody knows how he will be scorned if he tries to learn anything. This may be one of the reasons why so few of us ever do try to learn anything after we are old enough to defend ourselves from teachers; and it is the natural explanation for much of the horrified scorn of the class known as the *intelligentzia*, as they look at democracy lumberingly trying to grope its way forward towards education for everybody. They are certain the nation would be a much more agreeable spectacle to delicate-minded folks if "the masses" were content to sit on the banks and watch their intellectual betters cut figures-of-eight on the educational ice.

It might be more agreeable. It might conceivably be better for everybody. But it is not what is going to happen. Apparently sensitive people must just toughen their minds if they are to survive the century or two before us. It might help them if they would reflect on the fact that nobody, not even delicate-minded folks, can know anything without going through the ungraceful process of learning it; and they might also, with profit, resign themselves to the other fact that when a whole nation is involved, the halfway stages of learning cannot be managed behind closed doors.

This painful necessity to go on studying after we are grown up is a new one. If we lived in primitive conditions we would escape it. The whole lore of savage tribes can be imparted to the young. By the time they are grown up, primitive adults know all there is to know, all that anybody can teach them. But this ideally

restful condition does not in the least exist in the twentieth century. We must go on learning, or perish; and in perishing bring down the whole complicated structure about our ears.

This need is already acknowledged by certain among our professions. Every doctor has had long years of careful schooling. But if he never studies medicine after he takes his diploma, he soon gets thrown out on the dump-heap. Pressure is constantly brought to bear upon teachers to keep up with their profession by studying their technical magazines, by observing at regular intervals the work of specially able teachers, by going to summer courses, by taking an occasional year off for extra study. Those teachers who stay put, mentally, as they were when they graduated from Normal School, slide lower and lower down till they land in the poorest jobs, or none at all.

This demand for human personalities which are developing rather than stagnating, constantly reaches out into new fields with its quickening summons to keep moving. One of the fields where it is most insistent, although newest, is in the field of parenthood. This demand for study has been painfully disconcerting to the practitioners of that old profession, who had, judging from their actions, never dreamed that any intellectual activity at all was needed to meet the demands on them. It has been a jolt to fathers and mothers to be told by public opinion that they do not know by the light of nature how to bring up children any more than a dentist knows by the light of nature how to fill teeth. It has been news to them that human development has

any laws, that study is needed to understand those laws, and that if they are not understood, a parent is about as apt to be successful in managing a child as a Hottentot in managing a gas-engine.

There are many explanations why this profound, yet perfectly natural ignorance of child-nature has been unsuspected by parents:—one is the usual human unwillingness to doubt one's omniscience; another is that parental life constantly puts them in contact with learners, which as we have seen above is a nerve-racking experience for the unreflecting. During the best years of their lives parents are condemned to the constant spectacle, exasperating to those who do not see its mighty meaning, of other human beings laboriously learning what the parents learned so long ago they have forgotten there was a time when they did not know. They live every day with human beings who are clumsily learning the most simple obvious things "that any fool would know" . . . how to feed themselves, how to walk, how to put on their clothes, how to spell d-o-g. How *could* they—one can conceive their outraged question—respect the individuality of human beings who do not know how to spell d-o-g! They could not, and did not.

In fact parents have not come off very well from the ordeal of a life calculated to try the fineness of grain of any nature. Fathers have, for the most part, solved their difficulties by looking the other way as much as possible, turning their heads back towards the growing children long enough to bark out an outraged command to do something different, or to lend

hastily improvised and usually futile help when the learner's flounderings have taken him into water too deep for his safety. Mothers, in the mass, have not looked the other way nearly enough, have hung over their sweet babes till they could see nothing else in life, and, generation after generation, have shrunk together in uncomprehending, irritating, worse-than-useless sorrow when their sweet babes insisted upon growing up into complex human beings darkly troubled by the problems of our inharmonious human inheritance.

Both fathers and mothers, being the intelligentsia of their little world (strange and tragi-comic as this fact is), have often succumbed to the traditional temptations which intelligentsia seldom resist; to wit, (a) the pleasure in being superior which leads to stamping down any effort of the inferiors to improve; (b) disbelief in the vitality of the principle of growth (in others); (c) immense overvaluation of the relatively small degree of existing superiority, and consequently immense undervaluation of the amount still to be learned by the soi-disant superiors; and (d)—this by far the most important, the very key to the whole matter—black ignorance of the fact that human development proceeds according to underlying laws.

In regard to the laws of growth of their children's minds and personalities, parents have known as little as one may imagine the earlier generation of primitive agricultural man to have known about the principles of vegetable growth. Was it dropping those little dry grains in the ground that made the crop of corn grow?

Or was it the beating of the tom-tom by that highly-paid medicine man beside the field, in the dark of the moon? Why did putting a rotten fish in each hill of corn make the crop better? Perhaps it was not the fish at all, but the fact that the old witch-woman had told us to remember as we put the fish into the ground to stamp three times with the left foot and bow to the north. Impossible to know. How could such dark mysteries ever be fathomed by the finite mind?

In the matter of what was the best thing to do for children, we have been in very much this bemused, tom-tom beating state of mind. Why did some of them turn out so well, and others brought up in the same conditions go to the insane asylum and the penitentiary? God alone knew. And He passed along very little of His knowledge to parents.

During the last century and a quarter the idea has been filtering into the minds of a few of the people in contact with children, that God's usual method of passing along knowledge is to give people brains to dig for it. But a century ago (and also much later than that, alas!) the care of young children was always left to ignorant or brainless people who couldn't get any other job. Women who would never dream of entrusting their delicate silver or fine linen to an ignorant, inexperienced, conscienceless "hired girl," cheerfully left their young children in the hands of just such hired nursemaids. People with brains and education never dreamed that it might be worth their while to do "baby-tending" as they scornfully called the care of children under school-age. So, since the usual attendants of

young children were ignorant, brainless and incapable of intellectual effort, how could they learn anything about the nature of children? They could not. They did not. And since nobody else was in contact with young children long enough to come to know them! . . .

There the human race stuck fast. The way towards understanding the laws of development of children seemed blocked. It took a long time, the usual generation or two which we always seem to take to catch up to an idea, before one way around the difficulty presented itself. Suppose occasional brainy people did occupy themselves with young children? . . .

Even before this, a few rare and superior men had already guessed at this, as rare human specimens often do guess at truths. The three which come most readily to my mind were three Frenchmen,—Montaigne, Rabelais (one of the finest theorists on the education of children), and J. J. Rousseau. But, advanced in theory as such men were, none of them dreamed of putting their theories into practice with living, troublesome, noisy, inexplicable, dirty, and disconcerting children.

An Italian and a German were the first grown men to act on the idea that the development of the young of the human race might be as interesting a subject for intelligent thought and experimentation as—let us say—phrenology which occupied so much of the attention of the superior Mr. Hazlitt. Just as Charlemagne was the first great European warrior who acted on the idea that learning how to read and write was not be-

neath the dignity of a self-respecting, full-grown Nordic fighting man, so Froebel and Pestalozzi stepped out courageously to show the world that living with young children and trying to understand them was neither an abject nor an unmanly occupation. Pestalozzi was born in 1746 and Froebel in 1782. It took about a century for their example to soak down into the ranks of ordinary parents. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the first stirrings among parents took place. And the first stirrings were small ones. Once again we encounter the century which seems necessary for the human race to overtake its great minds.

There would be no point in setting down here all the stages by which the seed of this new idea—that even young children are human beings—was slowly sown abroad, some on the stones, some in the brambles, and some on good ground; how it sprang up and died down and sprang up again and multiplied and spread till it has become an accepted part of the mental furniture of every parent who has any mental furniture at all.

The premise is now accepted. The conclusions which will ultimately be drawn from it are weighty beyond anything imagined by the members of Child-Study Clubs or Parent-Teachers Associations.

Children, even very young children, perhaps especially young children, are human beings and need to be treated as such. This is the idea advanced by radical thinkers and finally accepted into the consciousness of the majority. And it brings for the first time an

immense number of ordinary men and women up against the great question:—*But how do human beings need to be treated?*

The first half-awakened parents looking about them for some light on this next question found very little available. Most of the ways in which society treated human beings would not do for parents. Parents rather universally and biologically, though blindly, really love their children, and in their queer mixed-up, unintelligent, human way wish to do what is best for them; whereas half a glance at any human society shows that its motive in what it does is not love for its members, not even the most mixed-up, unintelligent desire to do what is best for them, but a single-minded desire to use them for its own purposes. Society, so parents saw dimly, wants to get something for itself (at present material prosperity) out of its members and so long as it gets that it gives not a hang for what happens to any individual one in the process. But parents care very much indeed for what happens to each one of their children. They must look elsewhere, then, than to tradition or to the present state of society to find out how to treat them. Who—they asked themselves dimly,—knew anything sound and workable about the mysterious, complicated processes which go on under the smooth, soft skin of babies?

When I have said “parents” I should, to be accurate, have said “mothers,” for it is only very recently that fathers have realized that they too are modern parents. The pioneers in the movement were solidly feminine. They were the daughters, perhaps the granddaughters,

of the pioneer clubwomen who had had that impulse, so new to the majority of women, to try to amount to more by learning more. Those mothers had called down upon their heads the wrath of the enlightened, dismayed to see them emerge blunderingly from their homes, bringing out into more or less public life their narrow ideas on art and their childish prejudices on morals. It seemed not to occur to the enlightened that possibly art and literature and public affairs and a general atmosphere of decently humane and broad life—in short, civilization—might do something to the narrowness and childish prejudices of those women, as well as they to civilization. How could they learn to skate if they did not come out upon the ice, even if they stumbled about and got in people's way? Also, it did not occur to the enlightened that the general level of intelligence in any generation depends considerably upon its mothers, and that any improvement whatever in the intellectual background of a nation's mothers yields improvement for their children at compound interest. Women made aware of their own need to learn would see to it that their daughters (the collective daughters represented by the whole next generation of girls) would be taught the elements of learning earlier and less painfully.

The women in the nineties and in the first decade of the twentieth century who were the young mothers in the literate class found they needed to know more about the nature of the babies for whom they were responsible. They did not turn to the traditional sources of knowledge for home-keeping women—superstition,

the opinions of the neighbors, rules of thumb passed on by ignorant old age, prejudice, prayer—all of it flooded by the most heartfelt and futile self-sacrifice. They addressed themselves rather to authorities in whom the everyday mothers of the race had never before had any interest. They tried to find scientific authorities, people of brains who had studied the principles underlying the facts about which these mothers so sorely needed enlightenment. Placed at the heads of families, the daughters and granddaughters of the first club-women began to study and to try to inform themselves about the meaning of the forces they had to handle. I wonder if they would have thought of it, or could have done it, or would have been allowed to try, if their grandmothers had not felt impelled to look in the Encyclopedia to see “whether Botticelli was a salad or a tree” as the familiar jibe ran.

Physical care for children came first, as most visibly needed. A little book called “The Care and Feeding of Children,” written by a doctor who knew what he was talking about, was issued and reissued in never-ending editions. One saw it everywhere. Young mothers read it or one of its excellent imitators till the binding fell off. In the teeth of ridicule about “bringing up a baby out of a book,” very much like that which in 1870 and 1880 flared out stingingly over the silliness of women’s trying to study history, and to “be cultured,” they stuck to their guns (perhaps because their mothers had stuck to theirs?), brought up the babies in their class out of a book . . . and the death rate of their babies fell beyond anything that had been thought pos-

sible. In their grandmothers' generation, practically every mother of forty years of age had lost several children and took it resignedly as a matter of course. Nowadays, in the same class the death of a child is a calamity rare enough to make everybody cry out.

The social consequences of this one physical fact probably go beyond anything we can guess at now. Do you see where it leads . . . since fewer babies die, fewer babies are necessary, a totally changed life for younger wives ensues, . . . and so on. . . . But we are not, in this book, concerned with that sort of guess at the future, rather with the establishment of this new habit of mind in ordinary mothers in the home.

Babies grow into boys and girls very rapidly. The same mother who had turned for the first time in history to scientific sources for advice about bringing up her baby, had brought him triumphantly through his first two years with a glorious absence not only of the new disorders and disasters predicted by the older generation, but without most of the old disorders and disasters considered inevitable by the elders. After the first three or four months her baby had slept all night peacefully, allowing his young parents a quiet comfortable rest which was considered almost callous and unnatural by grandparents who had taken for granted that walking the floor o' nights with baby was one of the prices ordained by God in His wisdom for the blessing of children. He had not screamed and writhed in the "summer colic" considered as a natural part of his second summer, because his young mother in addition to loving him, had learned a scientific fact

or two about the life of bacteria in milk. He had been weaned and had cut his teeth without losing an ounce of weight or causing anybody the slightest anxiety because his literate mother did not use "sacred mother love" as a source of wisdom, for which it is singularly ill-adapted, but as a motive power for understanding facts in which brand-new rôle it seems to be starting a brilliant career.

So far, so good. As long as the baby's organism was mostly physical, his young mother's new knowledge about physical facts served her and him very well. But between the ages of one and two, it began to be apparent that there was more to manage in that baby than physical health. He began to act very queerly. To give one familiar instance, he began to have "tantrums," to fling himself down when he did not get what he wanted, and scream his head off, and hold his breath and turn black in the face, and so on and so forth in phenomena terrifying to his mother but very familiar to his grandmother, as familiar as the symptoms of colic. The doctor who so far had done very well as a guide and mentor, now went over the grandmother's habit of crude, unscientific indifference to the causes of symptoms. If the child had even one degree of temperature, the doctor was perfectly willing to turn his trained mind and experience into as clear and logical a search for causes as he could manage. There must be a cause, probably a removable cause, for a degree of fever. And he was the man who would look for that cause and remove it. But show him the child, blind, shrieking, raving mad with anger, and he put

his hand in that of the grandmother, said easily in unison with her, "Oh, just a fit of temper. You'll find you have to expect that," and turning his back on the young mother, strolled away.

The young mother did not believe a word of it. Had not that very doctor shown her ways to avoid many and many of the physical ills which older generations had told her she "had to expect"? What did she do? She did just what her mother had done and very much more steadily and intelligently than her mother precisely because her mother had struggled through the thickets and showed her the path. Confronted with a solid, substantial and to her, tragic difficulty, her instinct was not blindly to fling herself against it nor to cajole her way around it, nor to resign herself to defeat, nor to pray to God to remove it from her path, nor to shut her eyes to the fact that it was there. Her instinct was that one, new to women, which her mother had dimly felt, to try to inform herself about the facts of a situation, so that she could have a better chance to try to conquer it. She began again to look for people who knew more than she.

To avoid colic for the baby, she had been forced to learn something about the life of bacteria in milk and about what went on inside the baby's body after he had swallowed the contents of his bottle. To avoid tantrums, what would she need to study? Evidently, something about what went on inside his brain after he had received an impression from the outside. Who knew about what went on inside human brains? Men in laboratories, who are called "psychologists" and who

made a business of studying psychology . . . new, hard words for a simple-hearted young mother left quite alone by her mother and her doctor with a healthy little boy kicking and screaming on the floor.

At first, the very first, nobody of intelligence helped her find what she wanted, any more than they had helped her mother. She was laughed at for pretentiousness, half-baked ideas, and the naïveté of her faith in bookishness as her club-woman mother had been. History repeated itself. She went along the street where she lived, the usual American "residential" street lined with comfortable undistinguished houses, inhabited by undistinguished middling people trying on the whole to do the best they could; and out from those houses to join her came other young mothers, whose little boys and girls, so admirably healthy and rosily calm in babyhood, were also beginning to do queer things, were kicking and screaming, or hiding and sulking, or growing pert and disobedient, or secretive and sly, or worse liars than Ananias. The grandmothers and doctors of those children were laughing tolerantly too, counseling patience and saying comfortably, "Oh, they'll grow up all right. They always do." And each young mother was saying to herself in terror, "But all of them don't! What if mine should be one of those who don't!"

These young mothers "organized a club" with the well-known ridiculous American faith in organization; and in the superficial, unscholarly American way began to "read papers" to each other on subjects of which they knew very little.

And . . . there is a vitality to a genuine folk-way

which laughs to naught the small self-conscious calculations of the few brain-cells used in pure ratiocination . . . out of their fumbling grab at what they needed, has rapidly emerged one of the most widespread, enlightened, advanced, thorough, and interesting efforts of the American democracy to learn what it needs—the organized movement to study child psychology. It is being carried on by an astonishing number of American women, and men now, all over this country, in cities and villages, in Parent-Teachers Associations, Child-Study Groups, Child-Welfare Groups. There are dozens of names, all to designate the same phenomenon, as new to the world as wireless telegraphy—a group of ordinary citizens who are trying through study to learn something about the elements of human personality so that they can make more sense out of what they see in their children.

It is enchanting to be able to state that this time, after the very first, such a movement among plain and undistinguished citizens has not been left to flounder alone in the morass which undirected study is apt to become. Apparently the idea of the desirability and possibility of universal education has made progress in the minds of leaders of thought as well as in the dim instincts of the masses. It is now apparent to a number of trained minds that what is known by mothers of young children is important to everybody, quite important enough to make it worth the while of superior folks to help them steer their course. No laughing or sneering this time from those on the inside. Out from their laboratories have come psychologists

more than half-way, to meet the halting questions of the "mob." Far from looking coldly with the natural scorn of the educated man upon that dangerous "little knowledge" which is traditionally worse than none, far from trying as so many generations of superior people have done, to reduce by disapproval that little knowledge to none at all (which cannot be done), the specialists in nervous diseases have flung themselves whole-heartedly into an attempt to make that little knowledge more, to make it enough to be reasonable and safe as a guide in daily life. Psychiatrists, whom every one had supposed so professionally hardened to mental derangement that insanity was only an interesting case to them, have proved to be most human men with hearts sore and raw with their lifelong contact with perfectly preventable misery, who fairly leap at the chance to teach parents how to prevent it.

Would such great men of science condescend from their professional heights of "real" knowledge of a deep subject to advise and inform ordinary half-educated American men and women? Would they? Just give them the chance! Would they be willing to try to predigest some of their erudition so that it might be intelligible to people who really didn't know enough to understand, and yet so greatly needed to understand? Well, rather! Watch them at it!

No part of the movement towards adult education in this country has had such intelligent, eager, and ingenious coöperation from the finest experts as has this new movement on the part of parents to understand their children. No other subject of human knowledge

has been so conscientiously stripped of the shabby velvet of medieval Latinized jargon in which many other valuable departments of human knowledge still drape themselves. And this is—quite apart from child-study itself—one of the most important and forward-looking phases of this movement of parents.

I don't know anything which gives a doubting, hoping observer more faith in the advance of universal education along honest, intelligent lines than to look at the selected lists of books available to any of the many thousands of organized groups of ordinary American fathers and mothers who are trying for the sake of their children to make a little more sense out of human nature and conduct. They are not pretentious, shallow, "popularizing" books, written to please and flatter a shallow, pretentious public by making them think they know more than they do (as alas! are many of the popularizing books on the arts); they are not written by nobodies, published by wild-cat firms, printed in job-printing houses. They are published by the best firms in the country, and are written by our best-known philosophers, by experienced doctors, by trained psychologists, by sound educators . . . people who not only know what they are talking about but have trained themselves to know how to talk about it so that they can be understood by people who know less than they. And they have a public (or these books would not be published and sold) of American men and women . . . not specialists . . . who want and will read and study books with such titles as "Evolution, Genetics, and Eugenics," "Source-book in the Philoso-

phy of Education," "Psychology of the Pre-school-age Child," "Psychology from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist," "The Psychology of Everyday Life"—to select a few titles at random from a typical selected "List of books for Parents and Teachers" put out by a typical organization for child-study.

Under one such title I find this explanatory note, quite matter of fact, taking itself quite for granted, "Valuable to those willing to face facts *in order to manage family life more wisely*." You never heard anything like that before, did you? There is a new note from a new instrument in the human orchestra. From the beginning of time parents have done their best as they saw it, have prayed over their jobs, have tried violence, have tried indulgence, have punished, have refrained from punishing.—Did they ever before make an effort to understand what they were doing? In the field of parenthood those who did the work were always hermetically sealed away from those who knew how or might have known how if they had had any actual contact with reality to act as ballast to their theoretical sails.

Such reading lists are studded thickly with such names as John Dewey, William James, Havelock Ellis, Stanley Hall, Kirkpatrick, Bertrand Russell, James Harvey Robinson. These are all reputable "specialists" and yet they have written books which are being studied by a class of people who have never before "studied" any books—neither young people forced to apply themselves to any books set before them in order to pass set examinations; nor other reputable specialists read-

ing the books as part of their own scientific exploration of the subject. These new students are grown-up Americans, earning their own livings, who study those books because they feel they need to know about the laws underlying the human relationships of which they are a part.

It is the first step—at least the first considerable step—of a large number of average Americans towards the effort not to acquire more information about facts but to understand the abstract principles underlying facts. It is the first wide recognition of the necessity so grudgingly recognized by merely practical people to know something about these underlying principles if you are to make any sense whatever out of the facts. The first Parent-Teachers Association, and even now a good many of them, tried hard to “stick to facts” as the crude narrow phrase of crudely “practical” people goes; tried to conceive of themselves as committees for organizing picnics and raising money. But the spirit of the times is too much for them. All over the country, they are being touched by this new idea that the principles of human development must be studied as a necessary part of bringing up children. The air is full of that idea. Insensibly, information about it penetrates to everybody’s attention. One of the big Foundations is devoting a large part of its energies to spreading abroad the conception that parenthood is a profession that needs to be studied,—more, that it is a life-and-death matter for the nation to have that profession better understood. A large State University (Iowa) and seventeen other colleges (Vassar

for example) are acting on the principle that the psychology of children is as dignified a branch of human knowledge as any other—and very much more sure to be needed in every human life than any other one. In 1926 twenty schools and colleges offered summer courses in parental education.

The new nursery-school movement, spreading rapidly, is proving to be not only an activity for the better care of children under school age, but for the instruction of the parents of those children. Their contact with a modern nursery school means an intimate daily contact with the modern idea of studying the child's nature as the only way to know how to do what is best for him. The organization of a nursery school is often followed by the organization of a parents' class.

The interest of the American Association of University Women in the subject of child-study is especially significant. Until very recently, indeed up to a year or so ago, college women found facilities in their colleges to study almost every department of human knowledge except the needs and characteristics of children. This meant that married college women who became mothers were obliged to start from the beginning in learning their new profession. They have leaped forward to meet this need. In almost every group of college-bred young mothers a seminar has been organized for the systematic study of childhood. Their national organization, the American Association of University Women, has organized an excellent, well-planned service from their National Headquarters for the help of

such groups, and sends out from Washington all the bibliography, information and suggestions needed to start intelligent study.

What do these women study in their volunteer seminars, they who devoted the first four years of their adult life to the study of history and philosophy and literature and chemistry? They study from the books of experts and from the activities of their own children, the phenomena of sleep, anger, fear, love, work, play, courage, in young human lives. They apply their minds to learn what is normal and what is unhealthy in the lives of young children, so that they can shape family life to encourage the first and prevent the second, to create a family life in which children, as well as adults, may find the physical, mental and moral food, air and elbow-room they need.

Even while we gaze open-mouthed at the emergence from the void of this new idea that parents need trained intelligence and special information as well as devotion to their children, it is so instantly accepted as a matter of course that it becomes an aphorism almost before it is formulated. To put his mind on why children act as they do before cursing them out for it, seems more and more natural to almost every parent in our country.

"To every parent," I wrote, and paused to consider what Thomas Hardy said about parenthood years ago, before anybody else had thought of such a thing. Do you remember his pungent, biting, forward-looking phrase about the narrow parochialism and save-your-own-soulism of having a parental interest only in those

members of the younger generation who are of your own flesh and blood? All of the older generation is collectively, he told us, the parent of the younger.

Hardy has lived to see that idea of his lose the crudity of newness, and, mellowed with acceptance, color generously the minds of a whole generation. At these new "Conferences for Child-Study" which are being held with increasing frequency all over our country, who are the people flocking to learn something about child-psychology? Only those who have living children in their own homes? Not much. They form the majority, of course. But there are also childless judges—how can a judge settle questions of youth delinquency if he knows nothing about the psychology of youth? And heads of Reform-schools and prisons—strange that only recently had it occurred to any one that a better job could be made of tinkering up a broken-down human machine if something was known about what makes it go around. And every variety of "social worker" whose case-work invariably runs rapidly back to "what was the matter with his childhood?" And ministers, and doctors (oh, lots of doctors) and heads of big business enterprises—yes, it is now seen that even sacred business efficiency rises and falls as the units of it were wisely or foolishly treated by their amateur fumbling parents. And educators, some of them physical parents and others not. The people who attend Child-Study Conferences are, in short, thoughtful members of the older generation who realize at last that they are the collective parents of the

younger, and being thoughtful, know they need all the information they can get about their job.

What is their job? To provide a life for the younger generation which shall keep it healthy, and growing, and developing the best qualities and capacities it has, because society needs them all. To do this job they must know, of course, all they can about human qualities and capacities and tendencies, must know as much as can be learned about what sort of creatures children and young people really are. Before you try to make something out of any given material, you must consider what sort of stuff it is and how much you have of it.

There is no denying that a good deal has been found out by these new seekers after information during the last thirty years. What have they found out?

They have found out as axiomatic that children need a great deal of activity. This is not new. From the beginning of creation everybody has groaned over the troublesome unwillingness of children to stay put. But only quite recently have grown-ups conceived the idea that children are averse to remaining silent and motionless (as it would be so convenient for us to have them) for the same reason that makes fish averse to staying out of water.

Next, the discovery was made that they thrive a great deal more if they were doing something they found interesting and worth while than if they were grinding through a routine task, imposed from without, of which they did not see the meaning. Again nothing

new. Everybody has always known that children have a weak liking for interesting undertakings rather than for drudgery. But this taste on their part was considered part of their natural moral obliquity, to be chastened out of them. The idea is a new one that they grow morally ill and stunted if forced steadily to drudgery meaningless to them, just as much as they grow physically ill and stunted if they live on pickles, slack-baked bread and strong coffee.

It would be tiresome (so rapidly have all these new ideas taken root in our minds) to name over any more of these "discoveries" about the nature of children. We know them all by name, and most of us have seen the truth of them proved in concrete instances. Have we not all seen a sickly baby grow into strength and health and joyous enjoyment of life, when he gets the right food and care? Have we not known a sly cheating, "bad" little boy transformed by shifting him from the wrong sort of life to the right one? Have we not, above all, seen healthy children intelligently cared for, living along, month after month, year after year, not only without colic and teething troubles, but also without those impulses to cruelty and savagery which are dismally said to be the strongest things inherent in the human race.

I occasionally wonder when the idea will dawn upon us that all these things are true of young human beings *not because they are young but because they are human?* How long will it take people, continually in contact with the knowledge that right conditions generally produce healthy and happy young human beings,

to guess that when a social organization produces a great many sickly, bad, dull, unhappy adult human beings, there is rather something wrong with the organization than with the human beings; to guess that if the simple requisites of health are provided for human beings, a majority of them will be happy, useful and not noxious, which cannot be said of them now. For instance, parents have learned very thoroughly that if they keep a little boy shut up in the house, at some sedentary task he dislikes, the chances are he will become sickly and gloomy and will develop nervous complexes far more difficult to cure than to prevent—this, no matter how fine his clothes or costly his playthings. I wonder, when that little boy is a young man of twenty-one, if they won't question the tradition which condemns him to spend the rest of his years in a way of life very much like what they have protected him from . . . indoors sedentary work, either at a desk or before a machine; performing over and over a task with a purely commercial value; with only fitful brief snatches at creative occupation, such as we have seen is as needful for his health as is good food; the strong body they have taken so much care to develop doomed to inaction, almost useless (in spite of its costly clothes and massaged face) and so, of course, running the risk of mortal sickness as any unused organ does; with nothing before him but a succession of the same sort of days. All over the country people in contact with our youth are learning that children do not enjoy expensive toys as much as the opportunity for free creative effort. I wonder when it may occur to them that

the same thing is true of everybody; and that shiny too-costly automobiles and shaggy fur coats and perhaps even sacred open plumbing are futile and expensive toys which cannot console grown-ups for the lack of more important elements in life.

Child-Study Groups learn from observation of living children that a life the aim of which is the possession of many objects is never a satisfactory one, no, not for any sort of human temperament. And then from their study of books on psychology they learn the reason for this fact, learn that the human being is so put together that he cannot be satisfied to limit his activities to the possession of more and more objects, any more than to live under water. They learn that a healthy life for a child is a life in which he can steadily grow and develop. Won't they perhaps, after a time, wonder whether they themselves have that sort of life?

Perhaps from child-study, of all surprising sources, there may shine out a ray of light upon the topsyturvy social welter. Would it not be picturesquely unexpected if from the observation of childhood and the laws of its being, should emerge the longed-for relaxation of our tensely overdeveloped acquisitiveness? Here, as in every phase of this new interest in adult intellectual activity, there is more than meets the eye in the way of possible developments and of importance to humanity. The point is, I daresay, that any sort of intellectual activity has unplumbed possibilities because it means intellectual life and not death. To try to understand more of what goes on around you, whether it is the working of a printing-press or a child's mind,

takes you far beyond the particular machine or child no matter how stupidly you try to stop short with the particular instance. Any effort to learn—to learn anything—has in it the germ of the precious effort to understand.

It is always interesting to watch the incalculable way in which human masses act and react and find their own way in the dark; and it is interesting to note that it is the matter of human individual conduct, mostly in the family, which seems first to have stirred into viable life the capacity for abstract study of plain Americans—the kind who do not “keep a hired girl,” the kind who have no interest in “culture.” They seem in the matter of the relation of parents to children first to have felt the need to understand. They read serious and not-entertaining books on this subject, while no one has ever been able to persuade them in any such large numbers to read informing books on industrial organization or the theory of government or the tariff, although heaven knows the need is as great.

This plain American public of people who own their own small homes has long been the despair of Europeanized radical leaders. They will not put their minds seriously on important questions of international peace and the relations of capital and labor. Would the same town which now supports an actively studying Parent-Teachers Association or Child-Study Group, have any support for a study-group about the tariff or the theory of government? You know it would not. Ordinary American people of the employee class will not go in large numbers to Forums where socialism and the

position of the working man is discussed; the few who do go, cannot be induced to stand up and discuss such subjects with the fluency shown by the Jews and by foreigners. They will not, to any considerable extent, read serious books on political economy,—not yet at least. Nor on history, nor on art (especially not on art or music). In fact like most of us, they have a deep-rooted prejudice against any informative book.

And yet in their Child-Study groups they do read serious and authentic books on child-psychology. And every family magazine and even newspaper nowadays has a regular department discussing the problem of human conduct as seen in children. These departments are conducted not by charlatans but by specialists who understand more than most people do what they are talking about. Far more unusual, they have taken the trouble to learn how to present their knowledge so that it can be assimilated by ordinary minds. Angelo Patri's sound, simple, anecdotal, perseveringly repetitious, always human work is an example of what I mean. Because he knows so much about children he knows about how to teach their parents—slightly older children. Through such constant presentation of the subject, exact technical terms of the milder sort are creeping into ordinary vocabularies; and a wider knowledge of exact nomenclature always makes it easier to present accurate technical information.

Now if such departments are steadily printed in ordinary family periodicals and in small newspapers all over the country, it is because the editors know they will be read. No such periodical dreams of having

similar regular departments discussing as seriously, as intelligently, as frequently, the problems of labor and capital, or profit-sharing, or international relations. They know such departments would not be read by their general public. Why is this? It is an interesting feature of our American landscape.

There are of course many possible reasons. The most obvious is that the study of children much more than the study of political economy can be isolated from the terrible question of who is going to get more money than somebody else. In fact, the conduct of children in the home is one of the few—perhaps the only one—of the pressing, urgent matters of everyday life, which is not concerned with the question of money.

Another reason for the interest taken in child-study is that it appeals to the personal emotions directly, a great many times a day, as political and social questions never do. Another is that family life (to the hooting scorn of the ultra-sophisticated) has always been a subject romantically dear to the American heart. It is perhaps natural that on that personal subject, Americans seem most willing, by and large, to put some real mental effort in order to understand more of it and make a better job of it.

I am reminded of two valuable dicta, drawn from first-hand experience of business life which are the favorite axioms of a very realistically minded acquaintance of mine. One is, "You have to take people as they are." And the other is, "All anybody needs to get

up in the world is a crack in the wall to get his toes into." Both of these seem to me to apply to the situation described in this chapter. Add to them the educational axiom to the effect that "interest is the only absolutely indispensable ingredient for learning anything," and I think some light has been shed on the reason why Americans will study human psychology in human relations and will not *study* the tariff. A pretty good beginning is made if they will study anything. After all, personal relations in the home are vital to society . . . perhaps even as much as the tariff. Personal relations of all kinds are important in a democracy where persons are important. To study about them out of reliable text-books and to put some thought on them may very well be one of the cracks in the wall which makes possible the upward climb towards general intelligence.

More detailed information about the movement may be secured by writing to any of the following organizations:

Child-Study Association of America, 54 West 74th Street, New York City. (Founded thirty-eight years ago, devoted entirely to parental education, very intelligent, public-spirited, progressive and enlightened.)

National Congress of Parents and Teachers, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N. W., Washington, D. C. (Founded in 1897 with a mere handful of workers, now numbers more than a million members, with sixteen hundred units. Probably the most widely known organization in this field.)

American Association of University Women, 1634 Eye Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

National Council of Parental Education, Edna N. White, Chairman, Detroit, Michigan. (Founded in 1925 with the aim of coördinating the agencies working in the field of parental education.)

The Commonwealth Fund, 1 East 57th Street, New York City.
(This is probably the best source of information for psychiatric and mental hygiene clinics.)

Institute of Child-Welfare, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn.

Vassar Institute of Euthenics, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York.

Institute of Child Welfare Research, Teachers College, New York City.

Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, State University, Iowa City, Ia.

The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Foundation, 61 Broadway, New York City.

The National Child Welfare Association, 70 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

There are more, but these are enough to enable any one to make connections with this well-organized, intelligently planned young movement. An inquiry sent to any of these addresses will bring information of any sort needed;—reading lists, admirable and adequate; current news of Conferences for Child-Study; advice about the organization and conduct of study-groups, names of available speakers of ability and authority; bulletins; pamphlets.

LYCEUMS, CHAUTAUQUAS

THERE are two obvious ways to approach a project in mass education. One is to give the public what it wants; the other is to try to force it to take what you think it ought to have. With the first you make practically no headway, because most people are mentally lazy. You get on no better with the second because education is the last thing you can force down anybody's throat. In spite of their helplessness you can't force it to any extent on children and adolescents; you can't force it at all on grown people.

Experience in the field suggests that as usual, you must steer a middle course; must give up some of the fine flowers and bloom of culture you think people ought to have but apparently do not want; you must patiently consider ways and means to emphasize what is good in what they already want; above all, you must invent means to bring out their unguessed latent desire for better things. This is not a base compromise with ugly reality; it is only common sense applied to education. It is not base, because all normal, unperverted, reasonably healthy human beings do honestly desire something better than what they have. All they need from a teacher is to be reminded of that desire, to be shown how to try to attain it instead of stifling or mutilating or caricaturing this instinctive human reach upwards.

If you do not believe in this instinctive reach for something better, nothing in this book or in any other discussion of general education of any kind, can sound to you other than sentimental nonsense—worse than nonsense—a prostitution of the very ideals of education and culture. If you do not believe it, your instinctive reaction to this book will be to accuse me of saying that any man or woman in the street is capable of designing the Parthenon; whereas I do not by any means think every man or woman even capable of learning to appreciate it.

I do mean that all that we consider great in art, or in intelligence or in wise living, owes its greatness to its expression of ideals common to all human beings *in their highest moments*. What other sanction can it rest upon? I believe in an aristocracy of brains and taste superior to other humans in degree but not in kind. It seems to me self-evident that any art or theory of living so restricted that it can never make an appeal save to a very limited esoteric group is for that very reason not really great. Isn't the essence of greatness its potential universality?

I have repeated this confession of faith partly because it cannot be repeated too often if we are to avoid the easy and odious complacency of thinking that "we" (whoever happens to be talking) have culture and education and are considering doling out a little of it to the unblest multitude; and partly as a moral exercise for myself before beginning a chapter which is sure to be a hard one for me to write fairly.

The subject happens to be one which drives straight

against the grain of one of my most inveterate personal prejudices, a dislike for lectures, for speeches—for all forms of what is called “eloquence.” I dislike it reasonlessly, as some people dislike onions, or the saxophone. Of course I shall make an honest effort to keep that prejudice quiescent while I write of a form of mass education composed almost exclusively of lectures, but from long and rather discouraged experience in dealing with prejudices, I have learned that supposedly suppressed ones are usually making faces at you from a quite unexpected corner.

And yet I have not the presumption to think that I am right in the matter. Nothing is more preposterous than to feel that a personal divergence from the ways of one's fellows is necessarily based on superiority rather than on a casual eccentricity of taste. And it is quite apparent that a large majority of mankind do not agree with me at all, but have a great liking for the spoken word and much prefer it to the printed page.

This being the undoubted fact, lectures ought theoretically to be good tools for education of all sorts. This is just what they have always proved in practice from the beginning of time. My very soul rises in rebellion against this solid fact. I can hardly bear to set it down. In comparison with books, and honest study from soundly thought-out printed pages, lectures and speeches seem to me inadequate and vapid. I am as ready as Carlyle to denounce the lecture habit as a meaningless survival from days when there were not books enough to go around, sure to be discarded as soon as mankind had learned the better tool. But I lack

Carlyle's vigorous assumption that my personal preference is right. As I look around me I cannot but see that the spoken word is as dear as ever to people's hearts, that it has for them some direct personal note which they miss in cold print. I cannot help feeling that this is because they do not understand the art of reading; but while I hope they will sometime learn to read, I see every reason for getting (in the meantime) the most out of the method they prefer. And it is a fact that they naturally turn to lectures and talk, when they set themselves the task of improving their understanding. Perhaps it is the social, gregarious element of lecture-halls which seems attractive. Reading is a solitary business, after all.

At any rate, the early Lyceum movement was very firmly based on the spoken word. Perhaps it began when the spoken word was the only generally available medium. Books were scarce and high-priced in the eighteen-twenties and early thirties, when Josiah Holbrook dreamed his great dream. Whatever his reason for choosing his method, it was a sound one. It had vitality. Even today when books are cheap, public libraries open to all, and magazines, subsidized by advertisers, are almost given away, it still lives vigorously in the Chautauquas, in Women's Clubs, in the organized lecture bureaus.

Josiah Holbrook had more than a dream, he had a vision. Startlingly like what animates the leaders in the adult education movement today, it seems. He had the luck or foresight (probably the latter for he was a Connecticut Yankee from Derby near New Haven) to

fit his vision to the spirit of his time, to the capacities of the people he knew. He had energy enough to bring a part of it into reality—a little, not all, nor nearly all; for like other men with vision, he saw big, preposterously big. And yet, while his star-hitched wagon never was within hailing distance of the millennium he saw so clearly, it rumbled farther along the road than any sensible ox-team could have hauled it.

The whole conception was nothing smaller than a universal federation of mankind for the advancement of learning. Every town was to have a Lyceum, a group voluntarily united for study and social betterment. Its purpose stated in the original words, every one of which added to the picture of those early nineteenth-century times, was to “improve the conversation within the town”—isn’t this a civilized aspiration?—“to introduce good topics into the daily intercourse of families, neighbors and friends; to direct the amusements of the community by making the weekly exercises of the Lyceum both instructive and enjoyable; to help young people save money by keeping them away from dancing masters and military exercises”—was there ever a quainter coupling?—“to call into use neglected libraries and to give occasion for the establishing of new ones; to provide a seminary for teachers; to encourage and assist existing academies; to raise the character of existing district schools, to compile data for town histories, to make town maps, to make agricultural and geological surveys, to begin a state collection of minerals.”

Town Lyceums were to send delegates twice a year to county conventions which by public addresses and

the appointment of committees should "inquire how books, apparatus and instruction by lectures or otherwise can be procured by the several town lyceums and to learn the state of the schools in the said towns and what measures can be taken to improve them." The county representatives in turn were to form a State Lyceum—one object of which was the standardization of books and instruction in public schools, the fostering of "Infant schools and Agricultural Seminaries so that there might be opportunities for a liberal, a practical and an economical education, by the aid of the plow, the hoe, the turning lathe, the plane and the saw." Do you see Josiah Holbrook? Strangely familiar typical American mixture of belief in schools, in representative forms of organization, in idealism, and a homely practical slant as to what constitutes education.

Again following political organization, chosen members of the State Lyceums were to constitute a National American Lyceum with vague duties and powers to promote the movement generally and also to provide "numerous cheap and practical tracts on the sciences, the arts, biography, history, etc., to be circulated to branch Lyceums, schools, academies, taverns, steamboats, and private families to the end that there might be a general diffusion of knowledge." Nor was that the end. More logical than political thinkers, he dreamed of an International Lyceum with fifty-two vice-presidents distinguished in science, philosophy and public affairs, chosen from every country in the world. Quite a modern dream, you notice, with all the modern trimmings.

To be sure it was mostly a dream. The international

congress was never more than that. The national Lyceum did actually organize (1831) and seemed to flourish for eight years. It interested itself mainly in the problem of free primary education, and had considerable influence in the remarkable spread of the public school idea from 1830-40. But it was chiefly the local town Lyceum that carried on the primary object of the movement:—the general promotion of knowledge *for all ages*. The town Lyceum spread very rapidly, much faster than we now think any movement could spread, a century ago. "Millbury, Mass. Branch No. 1 of the American Lyceum" was founded in 1826; by 1828 nearly 100 others had joined it, by 1832 nearly a thousand; by 1834 nearly 3000 scattered from Boston to Detroit, from Maine to Florida. After all it was not entirely a dream.

The town Lyceums do not seem to have been discouraged by the rather prompt lapse of the national organization. In many parts of the country, especially New England, they continued to be the focus of the intellectual life of the community. Once a week throughout the winter every one interested (women and children too) met at the school house or tavern and listened and took part in debates or discussions on topics of general interest,—the National Bank, tariff, slavery, women's rights, temperance. At first local talent carried out the program. Gradually as that began to grow thin and too familiar, the practice arose and became fixed of inviting paid lecturers. Lowell, Thoreau, Hale, Beecher, Holmes, Greeley and many more spoke habitually. *Practically all of Emerson's essays were written*

for delivery on the Lyceum platform. Lyceums furnished audiences for Dickens and Thackeray on their American tours. Statistics are lacking as to how the Lyceums thrived in all sections, but they certainly lived in New England and the North generally. Gradually they became political rather than literary in tone, but that was natural considering the temper of the times. At least they continued to reflect what their members really cared about.

They did not survive the Civil War. Nor were they revived generally in the East after it, but after 1867 in the Middle West something of the same sort with the emphasis more and more on an imported speaker continued under the name of the Associated Western Literary Societies. Even today we still have Lyceums. They have not much in common with the Lyceum of pre-war days. They are not very different from the circuit Chautauqua. But before we consider them we would better define what we mean by Chautauqua.

We mean two things, not greatly like one another. For Chautauqua has run a course somewhat similar to that of the Lyceum, but here the parent institution is still alive, living on among its numerous but hardly aristocratic children. In talking about the family, one has to be careful to state which generation one means. They do not harmonize. Let us consider first the parent,—the Chautauqua Summer School. At first it was a sort of camp meeting. Later (1874) it became a training center for Sunday-school teachers,—“to utilize the general demand for summer rest by uniting daily study with healthful recreation.” As the winter had been the

slack time in the old farming days, so now the growing vacation habit made the summer the best time for getting busy people together. They came to Chautauqua in great numbers. Many of them were interested in other things besides Sunday Schools. The course of instruction widened. Bible geography, ancient history, Greek and Hebrew seemed natural developments—then came music, natural science, public speaking, library training, art. By 1924, a half-century after its founding, Bible study had dwindled to slight importance but there were 27 departments at Chautauqua Institution, housed in adequate buildings, taught by college and normal school teachers.

Chautauqua not only was the first organized Summer School (most of our colleges have since stolen its thunder), it also did pioneer work in correspondence teaching. After two false starts in 1883 a successful course was started whereby summer students could carry on their work by mail during the winter. Those courses were continued for seventeen years and when they were dropped in 1900 President Harper, formerly principal at Chautauqua Institution, had taken the new idea to Chicago University. Chautauqua brought out the reading-club idea, at first a part of the correspondence course. This system provides local circles with carefully chosen books which they read and discuss during the year. More than half a million readers, many of them from small towns and villages in the United States and Canada, have registered in these reading courses, since their foundation (1878) and 200,000 have followed them for at least four consecutive years.

But when we hear the name of Chautauqua it is not always of these genuine and quietly ingenious feats of educational pioneering that we think. Not infrequently the name brings up before our imagination a florid gentleman with an oratorical voice, pouring out an inspirational speech. This is very unfair to Chautauqua Institution, on Lake Chautauqua, of course, but it is not our fault. Chautauqua brought this association of ideas upon itself when it yielded to the universal human thirst to sit still and let some one else talk and do the hard thinking—if any. (I knew I couldn't keep that prejudice quiet.) Lectures were early brought in to sweeten the Chautauqua program of study. They were popular as they always are, so popular that when the immense success of the parent institution caused local independent "Chautauquas" to spring up in many parts of the country, the idea of study, of taking an active part in an educational effort, while not entirely lost sight of, was pretty completely overshadowed by more restful programs of lectures, music, miscellaneous entertainment.

The next step was inevitable, the step to "business efficiency." Agencies sprang up to route speakers through a chain of summer gatherings, agencies whose sole interest in the matter was naturally enough the making of profits.¹ I am sure it is not unfair to say that the professional organization has almost wholly

¹ The Swarthmore Chautauqua, under the leadership of a soundly trained, idealistic veteran educator is making a great effort to free itself from this dependence on profits, so that its educational activities may be quite free from financial considerations.

crowded out the old idea of summer *study*. The "organizers" sought of course to enlarge their circuit, because quantity production is always more profitable. To enlarge the circuit they needed to sell the idea. To sell the idea they have been tempted to make the programs more and more "popular" in the sinister meaning of the word. Today they have made a big business out of it. Some six thousand communities are visited, five or six million people listen, and about as many attend the modern Lyceums, which now differ very little in essence from the Chautauquas. The Lyceums are given mostly in the fall or winter instead of the summer, the entertainments are strung along at weekly or longer intervals, while the Chautauquas come in a bunch one after another filling from five to four weeks. Both are sold to the town by representatives of a commercial organization which hires all the entertainers and has the strongest commercial interest in selling the show to as many towns and villages as possible.

Both are looked forward to as a means for raising money for local charities, for entertainment—above all for breaking the dullness of small town life—for they are small town activities. Half of the towns visited have far less than two thousand population, very seldom is the real population of the town over ten thousand (though a popular show swells the crowd by bringing in the farm folk). As usually conducted neither of them has much to do with education. In fact the typical circuit Chautauqua rather suggests a combination of circus and vaudeville. A town committee signs up for a five-day program. In due time the advance-

men arrive, set up a tent, go on to the next town, set up another, etc. The performers follow, moving on in turn when they have done their stuff. On the evening of the fifth day, the big tent comes down and is jumped to the head of the procession which moves without halting across the dusty prairie states. Here is a typical program: *First day*, Male Quartette, and Bell Ringers—Play “Erstwhile Susan.” *Second day*, Entertainers—Humorous Lecture. *Third day*, Lecture—“Americanization”; Three-act Comedy. *Fourth day*, Mendelssohn Quartette. Lecture—“Failure of the Misfits.” *Fifth day*, Children’s Health Pageant, “The Musical Moores,” Cartoonist.—Discouraging, isn’t it, when you think back to the grand old men of the early Lyceum? To the teaching enthusiasm of the original Chautauqua? But that isn’t the whole story. Once in a while, almost by accident, for one reason or another, soundly educated, really gifted people of good judgment and good taste do go on the Chautauqua platform, and give real lectures instead of the usual blah-blah of home-mother-heaven, or real music instead of bell-ringing. What happens? Do they come back sick at heart from their contact with pretentious illiteracy, and with a lowered opinion of the race they belong to? They do not. Almost without exception they return startled, moved and thrilled by the earnestness of their audiences, by the seriousness of the attention given to them, by what the invention of Chautauqua even in its present state does for its intellectually starved hearers . . . with what it might do! . . .

That is what makes the modern Lyceum and Chau-

tautauqua interesting . . . exciting . . . tragic . . . what it might do. The machinery is there. The people go. Millions of them. Yes, literally and arithmetically millions. The kind of millions who until recently in all countries, have been the submerged, as far as conscious effort towards mental growth was concerned. Listen to what is said about those *spurlos versenkt* millions by the occasional authentic members of the intelligentsia who have ventured out to meet them. Gregory Mason, after an experience with Chautauqua lecturing said, "The sight of this tremendous thirst for information ought to make the most egregious expounder of clap-trap and buncombe expurgate such features from his talk. Chautauqua is doing a great work of education and inspiration, and is reaching minds that no school reaches." Alice Nielsen reports, "I found them hungry for music. I gave them as good programs as I would sing in New York or Boston, and they loved them." Bruce Bliven remarked, "As a newspaper man I would naturally like to believe that the press is the paramount educational medium for the whole country, but for the ten million who have the Chautauqua habit, I am inclined to think that their week under canvas as students in this traveling short-course university, is by far the greatest single factor in their intellectual development from year to year." Professor Irving Fisher of Yale says in a breathtakingly unqualified statement, "The Chautauqua movement has probably done more towards keeping American public opinion informed, alert and unbiased than any other movement." Of course when one con-

siders the extent to which American public opinion actually, as a matter of fact is "informed, alert and unbiased" this may not seem much of a recommendation; but the opinion of an experienced educator that it has done "more than any other movement" is not to be ignored.

Lastly, let me quote a cool judicious comment from a correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, certainly not at all given to sentimental sympathy either for under-educated people or for American institutions:—"The Chautauqua season has been in full blast here. A little town of 500 inhabitants will gather together as many as 5000 people at its local Chautauqua. It is essentially an institution for a big country. Americans have a positive hunger for 'getting together' and having got together, for receiving instruction upon not too arduous terms. The local Chautauqua is the event of the year and *it saves many a little town from that dullness and stagnation which is the lot of little towns in whatever continent.*"

Rather a tough morsel, all this testimony from disinterested witnesses, to be digested by somebody with a natural distaste for lectures, who would prefer to find evidence against them.

Of course the promoters play down to what they believe to be the popular taste, but you can't get away from the fact that no matter how cheap is their definition of intellectual life, the great majority of the audiences go to testify to their belief in it and their desire to have more of it. The promoters are only exploiting a desire which exists. The fact that they find it so

profitable to exploit it, testifies to its universality. They have not organized cock-fights in any such numbers, as of course they would if there had been the same demand for cock-fights.

What is shameful in the matter is of course that an audience of five or six million Americans is left to people who wish to make money out of their desire to improve their understanding; that statesmen, educational leaders, men and women of vision do not use this tool, ready-made to their hands. Changed as they would know how to change it, shaped to a better use, the small-town lecture course might become a powerful influence for better thinking. The opportunity is there, another field white for the harvest. The Chautauqua and the Lyceum combined must reach easily a tenth of our adult population, and a tenth otherwise scarcely reached at all. Was there ever such a chance for far-sighted planning for the public good? One only of our prominent men has seen this opening. The late W. J. Bryan may not have understood much of what scholarship meant, but he was certainly one of the most expert broadcasters of propaganda who ever lived. And he used the Chautauqua—with extraordinary effect. He was said to be good for forty acres of parked Fords whenever he spoke. He saw clearly the chance it gave him with practically no opposition from other ideas to get his ideas dynamically before plain voters.

But perhaps it is too naïvely idealistic to hope that intelligent leaders of thought may put their minds to doing something more valuable with this great medium. Even so, I do not wholly despair of it. It is a fact

of first-rate importance that a vast army of people do find it interesting. When people, ordinary people, are interested, are moved, you never can tell. . . . Once upon a time the English populace were much interested in the slap-stick and bombast of strolling players, and somehow *Lear* and *Hamlet* resulted. Or, take Josiah Holbrook with his humdrum materialistic interest in primary schools, town maps, and specimens of mineralogy. Somehow Emerson's *Essays* resulted. You never can tell . . .

Isn't this the sense of the situation, here as elsewhere? In all countries, one of the first instincts of people who feel themselves emerging from urgent material needs has been to start out after more information, and as soon as they knew of its existence, after more culture. But until now there has always been an immense class too close to dire poverty to dream of this. In America vast numbers of such people are emerging into enough economic ease to share this impulse. The machinery for their getting what they want is now better organized than ever before. This will certainly result in a national culture of some sort. Will it be good or bad?

It will probably be as good as we deserve.

UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

WITH so many mature Americans thirsting for information, mental training, culture . . . call it what you like . . . thirsting but for the most part unsatisfied, or only partly satisfied with adulterated soft-drink substitutes, why have not our colleges, the authorized distributors of genuine Pierian spring water supplied the demand? The answer that they have done and are doing just that, falls short of the whole truth; it took them a long long time to get started, and even today with all their energy, organization and prestige, they reach a total that compared to known possibilities is far from impressive. Why?

As for their slow start, that was natural enough. In the early days it would have taken more originality of mind than is usual among scholars to see any opportunity in—much less responsibility for,—education carried on anywhere outside their ivy-covered halls. How could such a thing be done? Tradition was all the other way. College education was something more than getting passing marks in a certain list of subjects. Part of it—a great part—came from the undefinable effect of four years' residence, a soaking-in of the academic tradition through daily association with men of scholarship and culture. Perhaps they showed a rather unscholarly lack of criticism in taking for granted that they achieved this undefinable effect. I am not denying that four years' residence at college does print a

special trademark on a young man's or young woman's soul. But sometimes when I have talked much with young graduates I wonder how much that trademark has to do with culture and education. But though they may have been tradition-bound they were not exclusive or snobbish. According to their lights American college authorities have always tried to be generously democratic. They believed in the value of their own brand of culture, and were anxious to share it freely, to set up no caste barrier against any awakened mind. Even the most conservative privately endowed Eastern colleges have always labored by scholarships and employment bureaus for needy students to make campus life possible for poor as well as rich; while the State Universities early in their history adopted the heroic program of offering a college education to every boy or girl in the State with ambition enough to ask for it.

Men so pledged to helpfulness could not—would not wish to hang back before an opportunity for fresh service. British success with University Extension suggested that even though the full flavor was possible only to esoteric initiates, valuable missionary work might be done among the heathen without the gates. In the late 80's there was talk among enlightened radicals of extension work by the libraries, by colleges. The 90's opened with enthusiasm. The inevitable national society was founded, a secretary sent to England to study methods, centers of extension study were begun in connection with workmen's institutes. New York State made a small appropriation for organization purposes. At the (also inevitable) National Con-

gress for University Extension in 1891 it was reported that 28 states and territories had organized extension work. President Harper going to the University of Chicago took from Chautauqua Institution the idea of correspondence classes and made it part of his university program, as the method of University Extension best suited to American scattered dwellings, poor roads, immense distances.

The movement seemed fairly launched. For fifteen years or more it stood still, then it actually dwindled. Several colleges gave up their extension work; many educators thought of it as a fad that had run out its day.

Several reasons combined to bring about the collapse of this first boom, so like the failure of the first attempt at free public libraries. For one thing few college presidents supported it whole-heartedly. They were busy with other problems, above all with their building program. At that time (not to speak of the present) college presidents were a little mad about bricks and mortar. One can hardly blame them. They must take what they can get when they can get it. That period was an epoch of newly arrived millionaires. Personal vanity was a powerful lever in persuading old Hardrox to donate the money for "Hardrox Hall." At times Hardrox could be squeezed enough to keep his namesake from begging coal and janitor service from the general university fund. But that was about the limit: no presidential eloquence could persuade him or any of his tribe to put up a penny for unadvertised experimental courses.

The fact was that extension courses had little publicity value. Except a few enthusiasts, nobody cared much about them. Naturally so. A college diploma then had no weight in landing a business job: on the contrary, many employers thought it a drawback. Even in technical lines the economic push did not drive as relentlessly as it now does toward special training. There was also a certain daunting inflexibility about those earlier courses. The colleges had no idea of creating a new technique to explain what it was all about to students unfamiliar with academic catchwords. They set out their old line of cultural and technical courses, confident that because these had always appeared to succeed with products of the educational machine (who could get nothing else) they must embody all that was valuable in a liberal education. If the general public balked at such dry fodder—why, there was nothing to be done—except, as one disciplinarian put it, “In dealing with people who work for the most part under difficulties the method must be more vigorously thorough, not less.” Anything less was “cheapening . . . educational insincerity.”

Quite so. Nothing is worse for education than shoddy popularization; but drill for drill's sake is perhaps as bad, and so are mental gymnastics that lose the spirit in the letter, that turn out pedants for fear of making charlatans.

At any rate whoever was at fault, though never entirely dead, the movement languished through the late nineties and the early years of this century. By 1905 it showed signs of recovery. By 1910 it was as vigorous

as ever, and every year since then it has increased and multiplied. Yes, multiplied is the right word. In 1913 California had less than 3,000 extension students. In 1923 it had 29,500. The first year they cost \$22,000; the last year, a quarter of a million. At Columbia extension teaching cost ten thousand dollars in 1920, four years later, ten times as much.

What had happened? One can only guess. For one thing the country as a whole had waked up to the university idea. Colleges used to be small, select and lonely. Now they bulge with students. The waiting list is often twice the size of the freshman class. Extension work has shared in this general interest. Many businesses now demand special training. Teachers especially and college professors (who make up at least 60% of extension students) are required continually to work for better certificates, higher degrees. And, whether it be effect or cause the colleges are now heart and soul in extension work. They are anything but aloof. In every way they can devise they are going out after extension students. Extension directors, too, look at their job from a new angle. They not only feel called on to provide the college type of instruction to citizens of all classes, all ages, no matter where they live or how limited their leisure; many have a larger (if hazier) vision of the University as a clearing house through which the "enormous accumulation of scholarly research shall be reported, interpreted and *applied* for the incalculable benefit of mankind." This program carries the extension departments into many activities that have rather less to do with education

than with community service, but it affects teaching as well. Of course a college professor is still a college professor, but nowadays on extension work at least he is doing his best to give the public not what he thinks they ought to want, *but the best they are willing to take*. So far as he can, he tries to think of it as a buyers' market.

There are between 40 and 50 (probably more by the time this book is printed) colleges and universities in the United States organized for extension work. Besides miscellaneous activities including (not all in any one institution of course) county agricultural agencies, farmers' institutes, boy and girl clubs, home demonstrations, community centers—community institutes, community drama, music, civic improvement forums, citizens' institutes, citizens' military training camps, child welfare bureaus, supervised play, medical and dental clinics, first-aid demonstration, school debating leagues, parent-teacher associations, municipal reference bureaus, State Fair exhibits, University newsletter, traveling libraries, reading guidance, foreign-travel-study-tours, general question-answering by the faculty, all of which may combine information with a certain amount of education . . . besides all these 57 varieties of university service they offer over seven thousand more or less formally educational courses, reaching in this way some 200,000 students a year.

These figures, however, do not tell us a great deal, for the whole activity is refreshingly un-standardized. A "course" may represent work fully equal to a stiff course for resident college students, or anything less

than that down to the almost irreducible minimum of two correspondence papers. A student may be a serious candidate for an engineering degree; a teacher or a professor working for a Ph.D.; or a man or woman of leisure taking a single soft subject as a relief from boredom. But however vague, the figures do indicate I think that a great deal is going on in university extension—a great deal more than any one thought possible twenty years ago.

It is quite beyond practical space limits to describe all this work in any detail. There is room here for the merest sketch of a few of the most significant lines of activity.

There is, for example, the extension class given at what college catalogs delight to call "extra-local centers." This means that if you live in certain states (particularly if you live in California) and are not foot-free enough to go to the University, you have only to find a group (14 or sometimes less) of others who want to study the subjects that interest you, and the University will send out a member of its faculty to your home town and give the course or as many courses as are called for. If you have difficulty in getting the group together, the University will help in that too. Sometimes the class meets for one hour a week, sometimes more often. The work may be heavy or light, depending on the nature of the course. It is practically always serious; home reading and preparation are required. More often than not it is up to the standard of undergraduate campus study. The University grants credit towards an A.B. degree, and to less ex-

tent toward higher degree for work done in about 70% of these courses.

In 1924 California had classes of this sort in 30 cities with over twenty-three thousand enrollments. This is taking the university to the people with a vengeance. It is an admirable system. These little groups working away under expert guidance at subjects they really want to master, making up by good will and maturity of character for any gaps and shortcomings in preliminary training, are refreshing to think about. There are some practical objections, to it, however. It cannot very well reach the rural districts where even fifteen students are often hard to get together. Even in the towns and cities the libraries often do not contain the necessary reference books for serious advanced study. To some extent loans from the University library can make up that deficiency, but there is a limit to the number of reference books (mostly expensive) that even the richest university can afford to own. Finally this peripatetic method is a heavy tax on instructors. They must either rush about like commercial travelers, or there must be an enormous number of them. California's salary-budget is the highest in the country.

Limited application of this plan is not unknown outside California. Penn State uses it for an interesting special experiment maintaining classes for training shop foremen in 30 industrial cities. But, taking the country as a whole, the more common type of extension work where regular classes are held, is extension in time rather than in place: late afternoon and evening classes meeting either in or near the university

buildings. These are common wherever there is population enough to support them. They are the specialty of the Association of Urban Universities, a group of 32 institutions which, while offering some courses of less than college seriousness, concentrates its main effort on duplicating "at night the courses which are offered by day in the undergraduate college and in certain professional schools . . . to such courses students are admitted who meet exactly the same entrance requirements as do day students and they are granted their certificates, diplomas and degrees upon completing the same course of study." Again an admirable effort to bring the University nearer to the people. One wonders naturally how these evening classes of wage-earners compare with the regular day students. Can they stand the strain of doing equivalent study in the short hours between the end of work and bedtime? To do so means concentrated application, but it seems possible when one considers how much time the collegiate *jeunesse dorée* fritter away in elaborate idleness, fussing, smoking cigarettes, matching pennies, bridge and jazz. Yes, an admirable educational attempt, yet it too has its shortcomings. It avoids the strain of travel, calls for no enormous increase in numbers of the faculty, concentrates students near the existing library and laboratories, but it can benefit only those living in or near university centers. Possibly with our population becoming year by year more urban that objection may have less weight in the future. But it will be a long long time before even half our population is within commuting distance of a university.

Restricted also as to the class it can benefit are University summer schools, which (however administrative convenience may classify them) are for our purposes merely another version of the extension idea. The attempt in this case is to offer the universities to those who are free to use them during extended summer vacations. It is rather the thing to sneer at summer schools because they are attended mainly by teachers, the only class free in large numbers for more than two weeks in the summer time. Why should this make them any less worthy of consideration? Leaving aside for the moment the question as to how much all university extension is "vocational," how much vocational instruction falls short of being truly voluntary, I should say that continued study by a large number of our teachers is a fact of first-rate educational importance. But it cannot be denied that short of a revolution in business organization, the summer school can never be of help to any large class except teachers, students,—school and college people generally.

There remains one other major attempt to get the University to the people: the University Correspondence course. This is numerically the largest class and infinitely the most flexible. Anywhere in the United States the postman will bring to your desk careful, trained, well-thought-out instruction on any subject of human inquiry from astronomy to show-card writing; you may begin at any time, go as fast or as slow (within reason) as you like, neither retarded, over-speeded or distracted by class organization; you may concentrate on one course at a time or select several,

correlated or not as you prefer,—you have a total of over 4,000 to choose from. There is no temptation to bluff or take a chance on not being called on to recite; you recite every lesson, writing it out at your leisure, taking time for logical thinking and expression. Your instructor reads your paper, considers it out of his experience, notes on it commendation or criticism, answers any question you may have asked, advises you how to study, acts in every way as your private personal tutor. About 80% of these four thousand-odd courses will give you credit towards the first three years of an A.B. degree. Residence is generally required in Senior Year. Some of them credit toward higher degrees. And for all this you pay cost or less. The average is about \$13 per course—but the range in cost is great. The university is not making a profit; it is happy if it breaks even financially.

It sounds attractive, doesn't it, this quiet written study and teaching? Yes, it sounds attractive if you have already a well-trained mind and a library well stocked with reference books. If you live in a cross-roads village with no equipment except an almanac and a thirst for knowledge, the road looks less smooth. But even so, what other medium of advanced education even tries to reach the cross-roads village? What a growth of opportunity in a single generation!

In fact to any one past adolescence all forms of University Extension sound attractive compared to ordinary undergraduate college life. No class-scrap, no frat initiations, no proms, no class-day orations, no organized sports, none of the blah . . . none of the rah rah

rah . . . nothing but the satisfying business of study. Why in the world don't people at large who want more education make more use of college extension?

For in any wide sense they do not use it. What are 200,000 in a population like ours? The regular college registration is 750,000, the commercial correspondence schools reach two million, the Lyceums and Chautauquas over five million. And of those two hundred thousand in University Extension, more than half, almost three-quarters, are teachers, professors, students—professionally in the business of study. That doesn't leave very many for the other occupations. Engineers and commercial workers (clerks and stenographers, etc.) are pretty well represented; after that, only a thin scattering. On the college books are listed students with various and colorful occupations:—actors, baggage-men, bakers, barbers, blacksmiths, bricklayers, butchers—and so on down the alphabet to undertakers; but though this is excellent and encouraging so far as it goes, it goes no great way: each of these occupations may have one, two, as many as ten representatives, seldom enough to make even 1% of the total. The enormous class of farmers is particularly discouraging. There are millions of them; the universities have made great efforts to reach them, have partially succeeded in reaching them with farmers' institutes, agricultural bulletins—but they reach them only as farmers. A farmer is also a man, a voter, he has crops to sell, money to borrow. He should be interested in economics, government, any number of subjects that would enlarge his horizon, give a sounder background

to his judgments, of which he must make many for, to a surprising degree in the twentieth century, he is still his own boss. Apparently he is indifferent to the opportunity offered by university correspondence courses outside his specialty. At all events he doesn't take them. And so on down the line. More discouraging even than the lack of wider interest, is the mortality rate,—not so bad as in some other fields but bad enough—35 to 40 per cent of those who register do not finish their work. It is interesting to note that in educational courses the mortality is decidedly below the average: in the power to stick-at-it-to-the-end as well as in numbers, University Extension is a teachers' movement.

What is there to be done about it? On the universities' side not a great deal. They are already doing all that they wisely can to make study attractive. Greater "popularization" would be more loss than gain. They might advertise their product a little more whole-heartedly than they now do. Some of them do advertise a little now, it is true, but not enough to sell any great quantity of their product. A soap or cigarette factory would have to shut down without a more vigorous selling campaign.

But the real fundamental trouble seems to be with the public. Take them by and large, they aren't a tenth as interested in University Extension as they should be. Well, it is consoling to think that this form of education is growing fast. Perhaps in a few years it will expand till it really reaches among non-teachers not only a few interesting exceptions, but every one

who would benefit by it. Perhaps . . . but there are moments of depression when one wonders whether university work no matter how widely advertised can ever get close to the masses. No matter how predigested and sweetened, will it not always seem tedious, laborious, at best respected as an excellent thing—for some one else? We all know moments of depression when human beings seem only slightly more purposeful than monkeys, eager to run after, to pick up and handle any new thing, good or bad so long as it is glittering, bright-colored; just as quick to pull it apart and throw it away; incapable of sustained interest unless continually stimulated, amused; unable to form a fraternal insurance society without dressing up and calling somebody "Potent Pontiff," confusing college education with mass cheering in a million-dollar stadium or academic parades in gowns and doctors' hoods; nibbling at culture with sandwiches and tea in Women's Clubs; enduring a single lecture only when relieved with an unconscionable deal of vaudeville and Swiss bell-ringers at circuit Chautauquas.

In such moods it cheers me to remember that men and women share a contradictory tendency just as strong—generally stronger: the capacity to plod along ant-like in the dull routine of their daily jobs, the capacity to undertake wearisome mental training in order to make that daily job a little better paid. This is perhaps why I do not agree with those fastidious critics who think University Extension beneath consideration because it attracts in the main only teachers and is therefore largely vocational. I know the objection:

that most of these teachers take the work only under pressure from boards of education, take it to get "credits." I admit all that. I admit further that the highest type of voluntary education is study undertaken solely for the love of learning. But I have not chosen to limit this volume to the few individuals who act from that motive, to make my book a monograph on a rare, brilliant, but as the human race goes, abnormal type of mind. I have chosen rather to attempt a picture of the intellectual gropings of the great average mass of the nation, willing to take on a smattering of culture of their own accord, but having to be bribed to make any effort approximating thoroughness. Of these two sorts I see more promise for the future in the second; for there, no matter how ungenerous the motive, the application is long enough continued to leave some mark behind.

I understand the scholar's point of view when he says that vocational instruction does not seem voluntary instruction at all. But isn't it? It is easy to quibble over the word "voluntary." One school of philosophy built up a strong logical system to prove that every act is so freely voluntary that the martyr at the stake might be said to enjoy the flames since he preferred them to safety by recanting; another school brings a mass of scientific data to prove that no act is ever voluntary at all;—that everything—whether we brush our teeth three times a day or not at all—was decided for us long ago in some ancestral germ plasm. Using "voluntary" only in its everyday unscientific meaning, let us look at a few of the worst examples. When a

club woman who might be playing bridge listens instead to a lecture on Italian primitives, when a filing-clerk decides to try for a better job by studying accounting, when a school teacher is told she must attend summer school or be sent to the back districts, and chooses summer school, I hold that each of these is a voluntary act in the only sense that is useful for judging daily life.

WORKERS' EDUCATION

WHAT is there peculiar about workers as a class which makes us think of their education as something different from lawyers' education or book-publishers' education? Why is there no need to write of "middle-class education" as a separate variety? These are not rhetorical questions. I really wonder why. I suppose the essential fact about workers is that they work with their bodies, either with bodily strength or bodily skill. In an earlier civilization they were the hewers of wood and drawers of water. Even now that manpower has become far too high-priced to spend it on simple jobs like wood-hewing and water-drawing, we still tend to stress physical exertion as setting "workers" apart from other people; we visualize the "worker" vaguely, as a large, strong sweaty man running some sort of a machine.

Obviously he needs to be taught how to do his job, just as a lawyer or a farmer or a publisher does. But we mean more than that when we speak of "Workers' Education"; the term includes all sorts of study, some of it remote from job-technique. Members of what we loosely call "the working-classes" learning about history or economics or sanitation or politics, seem somehow different from other citizens studying the same subjects. Why do we make this distinction? And will we make it, twenty years from now?

Do we make it partly because, although we may not admit it, we are still snobbishly surprised that workers should aspire to any education at all? Do we subconsciously think of them as they were (or as we are told they 'were') a century ago, submerged by twelve or fourteen hours of brutalizingly exhausting labor, unusually civilized if they could read and cipher up to seventh-grade standards? Even if we ("we" the writers and readers of books who know so little about the actual world) have gone beyond that, we may be still naïvely unprepared for the notion of working-people seeking for "higher" education, although we accept the fact that modern industry has little use for unskilled labor, and that "skilled labor" is every year coming more to mean mentally trained as well as muscularly trained. Are we astonished at the idea of working-men cultivating their minds as our grandfathers were at the idea of our grandmothers cultivating theirs; or as Molière's court-gallants were at the presumptuous upstart bourgeois who took up dancing and philosophy—because working-people have just begun to do it? Perhaps workers' education in its larger sense is thought of as something special and apart simply because workers are the latest class to rouse themselves and try to get their place in the intellectual sun.

But this is not all. We think of labor as a class by itself because we are often told by a great many emphatic people that it is such a class. We repeat this to others without questioning whether it is still true in the old sense. Maybe it is still a useful classification.

Maybe there is some distinctive quality which puts a thinking, well-educated, responsible, highly-trained, very well-paid locomotive engineer on common ground with a human factory-cog who merely screws a nut on a bolt several thousand times every day. They are both apt to have dirty hands while at work; they both use their bodies. But the assumption that they have more in common with each other than either has with anybody in another "class," rests on the idea that everybody who works in any way with his hands or body is equally looked down upon by people who do not. If this is still true, of course it is natural to think of their education as being different from other people's. Is it still true, I wonder? As true as it used to be? Aren't there signs that what used to be called "the working-class" is gathering itself together in one of those huge, silent, unconscious coöperations with general social change which we call "folk-ways" which will totally alter the social aspect of our human scene and of course, of education too? The sudden, immense growth of tax-supported high-schools, free not only legally but socially to the children of working-people, may be joining with other elements of life far from pedagogy, to blur the old lines which made "workers" seem a class, needing special instruction not according to their individual capacities like other people, but according to their class. High wages, smaller families, fewer tenement-houses, more suburbs, cheap cars, less manual work, more tending of machines, well-cut ready-made clothes, less personal service anywhere, and the restriction of immigration are certainly erasing many

of the age-old social distinctions between white-collar-employees and the working-classes. What this social change may do to the education both of children and grown-ups in the working-classes is beyond imagining.

But perhaps it is not this social distinction, now tending to disappear, which gives the labor movement its unity and its wish for its own separate education as a legitimate means of self-protection. Perhaps it is more the economic question of dividing the profits of industry between employers and workers-as-employees. This is a question which is nowhere near settled. It is still one of the bitterest and hardest fought battles of modern life. But isn't the alignment in this battle shifting, too? The complexity of modern business organization is erasing another old line here also. Looking at business as it is, and trying to look ahead to where it seems to be going, I think I see that we are all becoming employees; mostly our bosses too are employees, with bosses over them, while many of us, having employees under us, are also employers.

The old-fashioned personal "owner of the shop" (who used to correspond as a simple concept to the old-fashioned personal Devil) is being exterminated as the American bison was—both belonging to a bygone economic organization. The growing type of employer is an abstraction—a corporation, not a person; and just as many of us are becoming employees, so through widening stock-ownership, more and more of us (workers too) are becoming fractionally at least, employers. Doesn't all this point to the possibility that here, as so often in a long-drawn-out war of the past,

before any clear-cut victory can be won by either side, conditions will have changed so completely that no one will know exactly what he has been fighting for or about, or whether he has lost or won?

Whatever our convictions about the matter are, it is certain that things are changing rapidly; and this means that "workers' education" is all very uncertain. The very idea of education for workers as differing from the education received by any other Americans is mixed up in everybody's mind today with the workers' economic program, labor union strikes, lockouts, injunctions. It is seldom considered on its own merits. It is seldom clear-headed and well-planned, the emphasis being often too much on the "workers" and too little on the education. A spirit of class consciousness runs through the whole subject; so much so that in thinking or writing about it, the natural, logical basis for subdivisions does not seem to be a consideration of results obtained, or methods employed, or adaptation of methods and subjects to individuals, but rather the motive back of each manifestation—what did the organizers of the different sorts of workers' education think about workers, what sort of education did they think good for workers?

Looked at from this angle there are three main branches. The first class (first in order of introduction) is based on the truism that sharp tools are better than dull ones, trained workmen better than untrained—better for the workman, better for the employer. This is technically called "pointed education" and is limited—at least it is supposed to be limited—to train-

ing workers to increased skill in the industry at which they are making their living. Second, those who believe labor is a homogeneous class still fighting for its rights, have felt the need for special schools to teach their economic and social point of view—to train working-people more consciously to resist exploitation. This is known as “class-education.”

Third, a few educators believe that workers are essentially not different from other people and should have opportunities for general self-development, general culture—the culture which was first restricted to the nobility, then extended to “gentlemen’s sons,” then thrown open to bourgeois youths, then to bourgeois girls. To be sure for a long time in the United States the Universities have been open theoretically to all classes, but the actual percentage of workers’ sons and daughters enrolled has been minutely small. Since workers seldom sent their children to the universities to get higher culture, it was suggested to take higher culture to them. This apparently logical idea is so recent and has realized itself so little that no tag of a name (like “pointed education,” “class education”) has been coined for it. Possibly none will ever be needed.

These three main types of workers’ education are so different in aim that one expects to find them utterly different in result. But one should always remember that classification is a mental abstraction. Actual facts never fit into pigeon-holes. In practice these three schemes for educating workers overlap. You cannot—at least nobody ever does—teach technique without

stimulating the pupils' minds to increased grasp and understanding of some general ideas. You cannot make much progress in teaching general cultural ideas unless they are related to the realities of work-a-day life. As for the economic and social organization of society, and the question of a fair division of the spoils, those subjects have too high a potential for any insulation. Whatever you teach, they come crashing in.

Pointed education is by far the oldest of the three groups since it is the direct modern equivalent of the apprentice system and the instruction given in guilds. And it is by far the largest. There has never been any difference of opinion about it in principle. The better a workman,—the better anybody understands his work,—the better he does it. The only question has ever been how much training would pay. The increasing complications of modern manufacturing and distributing processes make training more and more necessary and more obviously profitable. The last thirty or forty years have witnessed an industrial earthquake which has made work very much harder to understand than ever before. Furthermore, during those same years the margin of profit has shrunk. Nobody denies this: most people are scrambling to devise means to cope with it—reduction of overhead, utilization of by-products, better machines, better-trained operatives. Efficiency has become the god of the business world and employers are just as anxious as employees can be—possibly more so—to make any necessary sacrifices to help the working-class get a clearer understanding

than ordinary experience can teach them of the how and the why of their work.

Take for example the position of saleswoman in a department store. This is a job which is not complicated, as most modern jobs are, by new machinery. Thirty years ago a girl who wanted to work in a department store applied for the job, and "learned by doing" with nobody specially interested in her progress. As such stores are now organized, an ignorant untrained girl can do far too much harm to the delicately adjusted business. Nobody dreams of turning her loose to find her own way about. In every well-run department store she receives some form or other of "adult education," some instruction given by professional teachers in the general principles underlying the facts of its business. There are also an increasing number of private schools where very intelligent instruction of the same sort is to be had—training for "store service" they call it. This is an absolutely new feature of wage-earning life, and one of which the ordinary citizen outside that world has no idea.

What do they teach in the months and months given over to their carefully planned instruction? They give their students truthful detailed information about the nature of the merchandise they are to sell, about its origin, manufacture and the relative values of different qualities to different customers. They also give them instruction in "applied psychology." Up to very recently this had the sinister intention of making people buy more than they need. Commercialism turned

loose with some notions of how to affect human organisms lost its head entirely, and thought of nothing but how to extract the utmost immediate profit from this new art. But commercialism when it is really long-headed has considerable perception of the value of keeping a golden-egged goose alive. Overselling, although still carried on to a hysterical extent by most wholesalers and manufacturers, is now recognized as one of the dangers to sound and lasting retail business; perhaps because the retailer is at the end of the long commercial chain, is in contact with the ultimate consumer who cannot pass off on somebody else his oversupply but must either use it or be aware of throwing it away. Incredible as it sounds, one of the things which the best modern schools for "store-service," teach department-store salespeople is not to be ruthless with the weak buyer, not to sell, even when it is easily possible, something which the customer will afterwards regret buying.

What is this but a practical realistic recognition of that solidarity of the whole social structure which many professors of political economy try theoretically—and vainly—to teach. The same sort of unconscious instruction in underlying principles runs through other phases of this commercial instruction. Everything, if intelligently looked at, is a part of the same whole. (Who was it said that Zoroaster, if well read, shed much light on American history?) The study in these commercial classes and schools of the history and use of cotton cloth, and shoes, and refrigerators and wall paper and the human brain, involves some recognition

of the abstract principles of science and art—"applied art," in our queer, unconsciously humorous phrase, as if there could exist, poised in a void, any unapplied art.

If these students from behind sales-counters wore medieval clothes and assembled in a stone-groined hall to study their trade, we would call it a "guild" activity, and recognize the movement as an honest recognition of the dignity of trade in human life. They are merely "learning how to do their jobs" it is true; but there are many moments when that sort of education seems to me to be fertile in more possibilities for *the average human being* than what is known as disinterested study for its own sake. Study about one's work takes root firmly, strikes deep and feeds on what the day's life brings it. The plant which grows from that root is not a rare and exquisite product, but a healthy and hardy one, which, give it half a chance, will grow in almost any soil or climate and cast a grateful shade over many a life which without it would be dusty and bare.

This sort of learning-about-one's-work used to be done (if at all) by the process of working, and living long enough to learn by error; a process not as sure as it looks to people who have a sentimental tendency to overvalue the past; a process assuredly slower than learning need be. That older process is now literally impossible in many parts of the modern world. When only a tiny part of any undertaking is done by any one person, he must "study" about the rest of it, if he is to have any knowledge of it. And he must have some

knowledge of the whole if not for practical efficiency, then to avoid mental sickness and nervous breakdown. The surest way of driving a man insane is to set him carrying stones from one side of the road to the other and back again. Almost as sure a way is to shut him up in one little detailed routine job in a sub-divided modern factory or department store without a glimmer of understanding what the show is all about. In such a job the worker does not often go picturesquely insane, frothing at the mouth or waving razors, but he grows dully sub-normal, brain channels harden, initiative and interest dry up and die. Heads of factories guessed at this danger long before psychopathic experts warned them against it; for years many large manufacturing plants have done a little towards teaching their employees something about the whole of which each operation is a part (the National Cash Register Company was a pioneer in this field). There is often mixed with this a considerable amount of what looks to outsiders like ritual nonsense of various kinds, but the core of the matter remains the recognition of the need for each worker to be more than a part of a machine, to understand something of the enterprise which he is helping to put through, the attempt to supply by teaching and learning in adult life what used to be acquired by experience only. The schools, or classes, or informal instruction in the work of the day given in most large department stores and in the selling department of many manufacturing organizations are duplicated for wage-earners in many industrial plants, from rolling-mills to paper-mills. The whole

conception of correspondence-schools started from the need to give definite instruction to adult coal-miners. Did you ever know before why the correspondence-school business had its first great success at Scranton? These activities are mostly elementary, practical, very limited, training rather than education. But they are a definite attempt to systematize the knowledge necessary to workers, to avoid mistakes and save time by some sort of instruction in theory, rather than by blind reasonless wrestling with facts. In spite of its humble aspect of mere utilitarianism, this is of course the same tendency which, in medicine, law, pedagogy, architecture, etc., has resulted in securing for society not only a fairly sound instruction for the members of those professions, but a system of education quite unlike our "abstract" academic brand, in that it does not seem to kill interest in the subjects studied but leads to continued efforts to master them in mature life.

The work done in these "corporation schools" is "pointed education" with a vengeance, like the study carried on all his life long by any good doctor. It has the merit of making no pretense of being anything else than what it is. In the unmistakable words of the director of the educational courses given by the American Rolling Mill Company at Youngstown, Ohio, "The fundamental policy of our training activities is to provide only such courses as may reasonably be expected to improve our employees on their job, and therefore presumably to help produce dividends."

This sounds very hard-boiled, does it not? But peo-

ple can be only as hard-boiled as circumstances will permit them. Look for a moment at the instruction which this particular company feels itself driven to offer, as a part of its pursuit of dividends—instruction in algebra, geometry, trigonometry, electricity, blueprint reading, business law, public speaking (why that, I wonder?), metallurgy and metallography. A limited and narrow list, it is true, but one which would have struck into speechlessness the grandfathers of those manufacturers or of those working-men; a list, also, by which only the most purely esthetic temperament could fail to profit. No matter with what purpose they are offered (and it is quite possible that the director quoted seemed hard-boiled only because he was trying to avoid bunk) such studies are so many doors opened into a more active mental life. Taken at its face value, the brassy frankness of the self-interest of the company's intentions in providing such instruction for working-men only serves with its involuntary futility to add a note of unconscious humor to the serious-minded earnestness of the voluntary education landscape.

How many of the steel-workers in this mill are interested enough in such studies to enroll? Of the three thousand five hundred men working in the mill, about one-third annually enroll in courses of study. Of these thousand and more men, about a third again usually stay in the classes to the end.

This is perhaps as good a place as any other, to make the general statement that one of the great problems of every phase of adult education is to induce

the students to stick at the work. The same element of independence which is the priceless element of this spontaneous effort towards self-education is also one of its great dangers. The percentage of those who drop out of all voluntary education classes is startling. Of those who start courses in correspondence school, pay for them, and do not go on, the number is fantastically high. This loss of two-thirds of those who enroll (in this rolling-mill), is not remarkable.

What does this mean? Does it mean that two-thirds of all adults are unfit for consecutive mental effort? Or only that the right sort of mental effort is not yet open to them? Nobody knows which answer is the true one. Since the discovery of radio and the airplane nobody cares to make positive prophecies about anything; and with Franklin and Lincoln in mind we all step warily in the matter of prophecies as to the possibilities in ordinary people.

Let us consider another case of voluntary self-education, in quite another class of "wage-earners" from rolling-mill men, in what used to be the futureless narrow field of white-collar clerks in banks. Thirty years ago, about at the time of the emergence of all this groping for better training, a few bank clerks in Minneapolis felt uneasy over the fact that as modern banking grew more complicated, they could make less sense out of the whole from what they saw in their small jobs. They clubbed together, engaged a teacher who could tell them something about banking laws and began to study. Before that year was out, a similar work started itself in Buffalo and Louisville.

The next year the American Bankers Association (following an excellent English model) organized the "Institute of Banking," in which these self-formed classes could function. This now has sixty-five thousand members and thirty-five thousand regularly enrolled in classes, taught very largely by men of the best academic training, inspected and controlled by reliable, responsible bankers who are officers of the Association. Curiously different this, from the totally unsupervised work of the usual correspondence school.

The courses of study are carefully graded into elementary, standard and advanced. These classes encountered at once, as do all forms of voluntary education, a total lack of suitable text-books. They did not fumble this difficulty, they resorted very little to make-shifts. The matter was put into the hands of informed, reputable practitioners of the profession, who, as rapidly as possible, are producing the text-books necessary, the cost of their publication being assured by the Bankers Association.

One of the notable results of this careful systematic attention given by the profession's best minds to the problem of educating the rank and file, has been the great reduction of the number of those who fall by the wayside. The mortality in correspondence schools is more than ninety per cent. Less than ten per cent (a great deal less in most cases) of those who start continue to the end. In the courses run under the auspices of the Banking Association, of those who start, sixty-eight per cent complete the work. This may per-

haps bear on the question of inherent ability of normal adults, if conditions of study are right . . .

Another very striking result of this successful experiment, is the change in the moral atmosphere of banks and their staffs. At the time when these opportunities for self-improvement began to be offered to young employees, the gap between the higher officers and the rank and file was almost as impassable as between a regular-army Major and an enlisted man. Banks (at least the large city banks) formed one of the remaining back-water pools of class conservatism, untouched by the American idea of easy moving up and down the social scale. Once a bank clerk, always a clerk—unless you were the son of the President, going through the motions of being a clerk. The fact of being a clerk showed that you had a clerk's personality, etc. The old class reasoning transposed into a new key. The higher bank officials came from another class, from another caste. They did not (in the larger banks) work up from the ranks. It seems to have taken only thirty years to melt that caste line almost to invisibility. A thousand "enlisted men" of the banking system who without this opportunity for voluntary study, would still be futureless clerks, have risen from the ranks into responsible positions as officers. There is no need to underline the social significance of the fact that the traditional American weapon of educational open doors has once more well served the traditional American ideal of the unimpeded rise of native ability.

The Dennison Manufacturing Company of Framingham, Massachusetts, is worth looking at, as a sample of another variety of educational effort. That corporation offers courses on "Principles of Industrial Management," "Industrial Psychology," "What Industry can learn from its own history" (lectures given by Professor Niles Carpenter of Harvard), "Machinery and Facilities," and the inevitable "Typewriting," which, although listed in practically every phase of this work in adult education for working-people seems to me to belong in the campaign against adult illiteracy, typewriting having become a necessary part of modern literacy though not yet so recognized by our lagging, conservative public schools.

Of these courses the most popular was the course on "Principles of Industrial Management." This entailed study of planning, purchasing, employment, wages, etc., etc. Very "pointed," very concrete *in intention* like all of the adult education carried on by corporations, but in the nature of things, leading to some abstract thought on industrial relationships. This survey of the field of industrial management is open, you must remember, to men actually earning wages in one corner of it, bona fide members of the "working-class." If in nothing more, it must result in much more knowledge of the situation than they could possibly get from their own individual jobs.

One more item from the Dennison Company's experience, which, as it has lasted more years than almost any other similar corporation educational work, has more to report upon. The director of their educational

program writes, "We have given courses in economics and government, with very high-grade lecturers, but they had no great drawing-power, not even among our higher executives." These subjects were, of course, more unrelated to the actual jobs than any others offered. This statement can mean too many different things for me to try to interpret it. But it is well not to forget it. It may later fit together with some other scrap of our social puzzle and make an intelligible part of the whole.

Something entirely different, perhaps even more stimulating to the imagination, is the instruction given by the Bridgeport Brass Company. There is nothing especially new about the motive: the heads of this organization have evidently felt a danger in allowing their employees to perform over and over one operation meaningless in itself, without understanding what part it is of the whole business and something of what part that business is of society as a whole. It is in the manner of presentation that their Yankee ingenuity rises to real heights. They have not quailed before the prodigious difficulty (which would have reduced an old line college professor to despair) of giving to minds wholly untrained in abstract thought some abstract ideas of the underlying principles of complicated modern business; and of complicated modern industrial society. Confronted by a class of learners with no long years of formal training in language back of them, quite incapable of following speculative reasoning on the printed page, they have invented a graphic method of visual presentation of commercial ideas, comparable

to some of the devices used by the most modern educators of the young. Colored blocks, colored charts, diagrams, are profusely used with an immense ingenuity, rather than words in books. One sighs to think of the clarity which would stream into the muddled brains of the concrete-minded in our college courses, if they had, in addition to their books, this new medium of instruction.

What is discussed in this concrete, visible way? The relation of wages to the other costs in manufacture; of wages to the cost of living; of production costs of sales costs; "overhead"; the problem of waste; and the *principles underlying interest and profit*.

The official, avowed purpose of the company in giving this detailed analysis of their business, and of the theory of modern commerce to their employees, is, in their rather amusingly grandiose phrase, "to counteract destructive thoughts in which antagonistic spirit can sprout." In other words to prevent their employees from thinking they are being exploited by the company. There can be no doubt that their exposition of the nature of their business is naturally enough bathed in a light very friendly to the management. But it is a new thing in the world for the heads of a business to give any exposition of it at all to their workers. Such an attempt to bring abstract ideas on the principles of business organization to the understanding of wage-earners would have been inconceivable forty years ago, and must be called an educational opportunity, a real stimulus to intellectual activity in adult life, compared to anything which came into the lives

of the fathers of those wage-earners. Even if the instruction given in this brilliantly ingenious way is consciously misleading (and there is no evidence to make one think that it is anything but as honest and fair as the employers know how to make it) it must awaken the brains of its recipients to some speculation on the subjects of interest and profit, on the relation of wages to other costs of industrial effort, etc., etc. Those classes are not composed of empty open brains into which any content may be poured at will, but of adult human beings whose mental processes once started go on functioning, and who, to hold their own in the twentieth century, need above everything else, brains stimulated to do more thinking.

It is impossible (because there are so many of them) to go on citing different examples of the sort of adult education now existing in connection with large corporations. The Standard Oil Company of New Jersey; the Westinghouse Electric Company at East Pittsburgh; the curious, bizarre, oddly successful work done in pure cultural subjects by the A. C. Barnes Company of Philadelphia; and, though of course not under corporation control, the teaching done among lumbermen by the Frontier College of Canada, are violently contrasting examples of this new conviction that the employee needs to learn about his job as well as work at it, and also must know more than merely his job, even in order to do his job well. Practically all of this "corporation education" has as avowed aim nothing but the better performance of the job. But not even the most profit-blinded capitalist is clever enough to

limit strictly to this one aim the brains aroused to activity by mental effort. It is, pointed though it may be, very much education, compared to anything which took place in the world of employers and employees a generation ago. If it cannot be widened to something disinterested and sound in intention, why could it not be combined with what is known as class-conscious workers' education, to make very good and mutually self-corrective material for an intelligent opinion on industry?

Before leaving this division of educational opportunities offered to adults in connection with their jobs, I must mention again the enormous place taken by the correspondence schools. More than 95 per cent of the subjects studied by mail in correspondence schools are purely utilitarian, directed to more skill in work. The same is true of the work done in the free (or almost free) night-schools maintained in larger cities, as a part of the public school system. The subjects chosen in both those systems are such practical ones as radio-telegraphy, bookkeeping, engineering, wood and iron-working, business English, blue-print drawing, sewing, a foreign language for commercial use—practically no "cultural" subjects at all.

An investigation of the circumstances of the vast army of workers who secure instruction from these sources shows a sizable majority whose history is as follows:—concrete-minded, or motor-minded, or original-minded, or merely slow-minded boys and girls, they suffer and writhe under the instruction given in our public schools, which is directed almost wholly to

book-minded children. As early as possible they wriggle out of school-attendance and go to work. It is our general impression, is it not, that children leave school and go to work because their parents have not money enough to support them in school? The figures of investigators do not support this theory. A large number of them go to work as an escape from a school which is intolerable to them. Statistics from some mill-towns where the matter has been looked up, show that adolescents who break away from school and go into the mills are, during the first few years, actually in physically better health and in greatly better spirits than they were in school—increase markedly in weight, have fewer bad colds, fewer absences on account of sickness. This rebound of relief at finding themselves in a world more suitable to their temperaments than the desk-filled, book-ridden school class-room usually lasts until they are about of age, or a little later. Then comes a flat period of no advance in pay, no progress into more interesting occupations, marking time in front of a stone wall, the end of the blind alley in sight. The dull-minded, the slow-minded, those whom it would be a waste to try to educate further, settle down here to stay like dry leaves blown into a hollow. But this is the point when in the case of the energetic and purposeful begins a period of voluntary search for more training.

The great majority of those workers who turn to night-schools and correspondence schools are thus the cream which has risen naturally to the top; in the very prime of their age; at the top notch of their capacity

for learning; old enough for steadiness of purpose, and with experience of reality; young enough for flexibility of mind and hand, and for zest in activity. They have, in real life, learned the value of study as—lamentably—our college students have not. Isn't that a description of the ideal student? Doesn't that sound like human material worthy of the very best educational thought and effort of any country, like clean, hard, active material of more proved value than the soft, assisted, passive brains of many of our college students? Like material that would repay the greater outlay of money and intelligence to give it what it needs in the way of teaching?

What is it, as a matter of fact, getting in our country? Some good but extremely limited instruction in the corporation training departments; the correspondence schools; and the night-schools in those scattered cities where they exist and function as best they can on the scraps left over from the appropriations for public-schools for children.

Have I said enough of "pointed education" for workers to give a faint idea of the energetic diversity, the vast extent, and the unorganized incoherence of the way in which our adult workers add to their technical knowledge? It is impossible to make even the briefest mention of all the innumerable facts. And it would take a wiser and more far-seeing eye than mine to be sure which facts have most significance for the future. If you have felt the existence of a widespread, rather anxious and alarmed need to do something, and if you have a picture of a great deal of activity, scat-

tered, overlapping, not covering the ground, wasting its energy, but with tremendous driving power, you have, it seems to me, caught a glimpse of what is going on.

Now for the second division of workers' education:—that which has for aim to equip them with the intellectual tools to escape from exploitation of all kinds, to secure more nearly their fair share of power, and prosperity and social consideration—of everything which the citizen of a republic has a right to expect. This is called "class-education" and as such arouses an instant suspicion in the minds of most Americans out of the working-class. This suspicion is based on an ignoring (or an ignorance) of the fact that we already have class-education, and always have had it. If the college instruction in history and economics were not taught from the standpoint of one only of the social classes—namely property owners, there would be no movement to teach those subjects from the point of view of another class. There is no special reproach to our colleges implied in this fact. They are established institutions, and established institutions always tend naturally, unconsciously, to glorify the status quo, and hence need to be counterbalanced in some way.

The second movement is so new in the United States that wherever it exists it is only in the very beginning stages, and the educators in charge of it are themselves too intelligent to venture any definite prophecy as to the future. Most of it started no more than four or five years ago, and such a school for

the leaders of the labor movement as the Rand School in New York (started all of twenty years ago) although compared to an ordinary American college the newest of the new, is hoary with age and tradition compared to the few schools for wage-earners themselves. Brookwood School, so often cited as a "typical" workers' college, is intended to give special instruction to the officials of labor unions, not to the rank and file, and at that has but forty-two students drawn from the class of officials. The movement is in the very first stage, that of preparing its leaders; and with our whole social organization shifting from one phase to another, almost year by year, not even those leaders can make much of a guess as to what they will do with their training when they get it.

What, exactly, is the "professional" training given to labor union officials at Brookwood . . . taken as a sample? It is enough like that given at the Rand School to show the general trend. Nothing at all alarming to anybody with ordinary sense—the usual college studies of "history of civilization," economics, psychology, government, etc., taught from the point of view of wage-earners rather than from the point of view of college-professors, whatever that is. English, of course, as the universal tool for any enterprise, is always a part of such programs of study. They usually include special studies of the history of the American labor movement, survey of foreign labor movements, trade union administration, labor legislation and administration.

Wherever possible, emphasis is laid on the Socialist

detestation of war, Socialist belief in the brotherhood of man, internationalism, and the doctrine that foreigners are human beings with aspirations and rights and qualities which even native-born American citizens ought to respect.

If this class education movement has a weakness it lies in the fact that it *may* not be as close to the rank and file of our workers now and as they probably will be in the next generation, as similar education in other countries. Native American labor and the second generation of Americanized working-people have never been and are not now as thoroughly self-conscious, certainly not as articulate as labor in Europe. With the disappearance of each first generation of foreign working people, naturally a great many European ideas disappear. Their children have not the same traditions as to labor, the same natural internationalism (since they no longer belong to two nations), the same passionate class consciousness. Those of their leaders who are specially interested in class education, sharing through books the developments in the whole field of workers the world around, retain a closer contact with Europe, a more international mind, traditions more colored with knowledge of European facts and ideas. This for the simple reason that Americans with no background save America, have had very few ideas of any kind on the position of laboring men as differing from anybody else.

It follows that such leaders in class education perhaps do not have as complete an intuitive unity with the great body of their followers as similar leaders in

other countries where both leaders and rank-and-file have about the same mental background and experience.

Since the restriction of immigration means that we shall have fewer first-generation European workers than ever before, it seems possible that this impalpable distance (if indeed it exists) between workers and educational leaders might increase and make it harder for the leaders to have what is called, according to one's habit of speech, a "hunch" or a "folk-way" or a flash of "inner light" . . . the sort of half-conscious instinct for the solution of knotty problems which has become a legendary trait of Abraham Lincoln's character. Paradoxical as it sounds, it may therefore be among the possibilities of the workers'-education situation, that those who have given most conscious study to it may know no more than other people what its development is likely to be. It may be that the next generation of workers themselves will have very different ideas as to what education they want, and may possibly try to get it by broadening the general education open to all Americans rather than by creating their own variety.

However that may be, no possible fault can be found with the subjects now taught at the existing labor colleges. They are not only perfectly legitimate material for the education of wage-earners and their leaders, but they would be excellent material, just as they stand, for filling in a very blank place in our present organized education. Why should such new and valuable instruction be restricted to one set of our citizens? Who would not wish that every college-student in the coun-

try could spend six months in such a school? Indeed, one of the possible by-products of this movement might be the so-greatly-needed broadening of our college work. If only the colleges would take the hint!

There are signs that they will, one of which is the now famous Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers in Industry, which is being followed by a similar school at the University of Wisconsin, and another at Barnard College, Columbia. The Bryn Mawr Summer School has about one hundred wage-earning women in its courses for eight weeks of every summer. They are all either factory-workers, waitresses or telephone operators, carefully selected from different regions to represent all the different sections of the country. In 1924 there were working girls representing 21 states, 12 nationalities, and 23 trades. They study economics, composition and hygiene (compulsory) and one out of three electives, literature, psychology and science. In these subjects they are given the best possible instruction, not only good lecturers, but plenty of tutoring, plenty of personal contact with instructors, plenty of sympathetic individual instruction, and plenty of time in a good library.

The result of the combination of their eager, awakened, adult brains with first-rate teachers seems to most observers like a glimpse of an educator's Paradise. Both the professors and the students are in a continuous glow of lively intellectual activity; and such a glow is apparently so strange a spectacle to Americans used to the atmosphere of our colleges and universities that spectators are moved by it to deep

emotion. One of the instructors, who is a member of the faculty of a well-known woman's college, says of his summer's work at Bryn Mawr, "After standing up for eight months before the somnolent daughters of the plutocracy, it is like a breath of fresh air to come here and be challenged on economic theory by a garment worker." Mr. Pepper, the author of the Carnegie report on this work, says amusingly that possibly in view of the vivid pulsing life in the Bryn Mawr working-girls' classes, one may be forced to revise the old adage about ideal education being Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and a boy on the other. Doesn't a good deal depend on the boy? Isn't it true that Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and Socrates on the other would not create education for a boy between them, if the boy had no desire to be educated, no interest in the things of the mind and was there only for social purposes?

It is certain that the teachers of the Bryn Mawr summer school enjoy almost pathetically the experience of being able to devote themselves solely to teaching, not to any of the tricks or stunts for "holding the interest of the class," and are themselves as much stimulated by the eagerness of their students as the students are stimulated by the educational opportunity. Let me recommend to every comfortable American reader of this book that at this point he lay it down and do a little meditating of his own as to the light cast upon our college education by those Bryn Mawr "factory hands."

The Bryn Mawr experiment is a small and complete one, and almost wholly successful. It attempts to reach

only a very few, and it makes the contact with those few as perfect as possible. That is one way to attack the problem. Another of quite different sort is the Workers' Education Bureau, which has technically affiliated with it three million workers. The American Federation of Labor has recommended that all unions assess their membership half a cent per capita for the support of this Bureau. It was organized only five years ago, and in 1924 reported that it had organized 197 labor educational committees, 53 study classes, 35 trades-union colleges, that 30,000 are enrolled in labor and education classes and that "mass educational" ventures had reached approximately 300,000. (By this phrase is usually meant lectures, open forums, etc.) It is, of course, quite unfair to quote these figures from a field of adult education so newly opened. They can give us no idea of its possibilities. The leaders have themselves no idea. The Bureau is, for instance, only beginning to grapple with the obstacle which confronts every phase of voluntary education, the total lack of suitable text-books, and the almost total lack of the right kind of teachers, problems which also confront the Girls' Clubs, recently (four years ago) turned to voluntary education. Twenty years from now, some one can write an intelligent estimate of the value of this movement. Not now.

Is this the right place, I wonder, to mention the various Forums which play a considerable educative rôle in the United States in a single part of our country, among one kind of people, in New England, New York and New Jersey, mostly among the foreign-born and

Jewish members of the big-city working populations?

The very well-known People's Institute¹ of New York City, and Ford Hall in Boston are good examples of this sort of working-men's lecture-courses. There are nearly two hundred of these open Forums in the larger industrial cities of the East, meeting usually once a week during about four months of the year, with an average attendance of 450 in the audience.

Is attendance at those lectures and the sending of an occasional written question to the platform, a form of "education for working-men"? It is certainly mentally stimulating and certainly leads to thought and discussion. Anything which accomplishes that is educative, of course, although here as in all courses of lectures, the criticism made on the lecture-courses of Women's Clubs is a just one,—to go without preparation, to listen to a lecture, to return to the life of everyday without more study, is hardly more than a meaningless episode in anybody's existence. The essential elements of study and preparation and continuity of personal effort are wholly lacking. One is at a loss how rightly to value it as an element in our national life. My own method is the helpless one of pure "contrariness." When I am with superior people who scorn "going to lectures" as worse than worthless, I am always moved to see the possibilities in them for simple folks who have no other contact with intellectual life, and especially to see possibilities in them for broadening the home background and hence opening

¹During the winter of 1926-27 The People's Institute added to its courses of lectures fifteen experimental study-classes for adults.

a wider world to the next generation. When, on the contrary, I am with belligerently pretentious people who are ignorant enough to think that "going to lectures" is the equivalent of "getting an education," I rapidly ascend to the seat of the scorers. I do not recommend this system of valuation. If I knew a better, I would follow it.

There is one more very interesting thing to report about these open Forums of discussion, in the East. Free, as far as I can see, to talk about anything that interests them, they generally discuss one subject and that only from one point of view—almost without exception, they are concerned, from the radical point of view, with social questions—the organization of an industrial society.

Are there other meetings, other opportunities for esthetic or intellectual activities, among working-people? Is there anything in this country for wage-earners comparable to the Danish folk-schools where the aim is cultural? (Yes, I know your instant prejudice against this misused word. But what other is there? And isn't our prejudice against it a remnant of a crude, backwoodsman's prejudice against the silly ostentation of clean napkins?) Is there any educational activity for wage-earners in this country where the purpose of both teacher and grown-up student is neither to make more money, nor to fight a more winning battle for recognition and power, but to develop each individual personality as harmoniously as possible?

I have a melancholy notion that without the practical demonstration of the possibility of such an in-

terest among the Danes, the mere statement of this purpose, either for working-people as a class, or for able-bodied men of any class at all, would sound like bunk to Americans. We wish our "working-people" to own their own cars and homes and fur-coats and bathtubs, and to have plenty of money for the movies and for more meat and candy than is good for them (in short to share the general national life to the fullest) but we do not see them in our mind's eye learning poetry by heart, or reviving folk-dances or designing their own pottery and furniture, or singing part-music for fun, or following the latest theories of science. Do we, in our mind's eye, see any grown man engaged in such pursuits? There is a large black bottomless pit in our American world, in the region occupied in Denmark by such cultural opportunities offered to workers. Workers' children in our schools study "English Lit" but, by and large, there are no literary clubs or classes or reading circles or poetry associations where a wage-earner and his wife would be taken in as a matter of course and made to feel at home. The oddest little streak of unavowed caste-feeling still keeps both of them out of such organizations, just as some unavowed prejudice keeps most of our men of the property-owning class out of them. All over this country there is scarcely one town which has not a Women's Club, spending from sixteen to twenty-five meetings every year on such history, literature, art and music as they can secure for themselves. Without discussing the question of how much they get, it is certainly an advance over anything their grandmothers had. Beside

them is growing up a class, often materially more prosperous than they, often with exactly the same public-school background, living from year to year all its life through with no advance over what its grandfathers had in the way of literary and artistic stimulus, unless one counts the stimulus of the movie and the tabloids. The wife of the well-to-do grocer belongs to the Women's Club, but not the wife of the well-to-do steel-worker.

I perceive that this sounds like an arraignment, and I do not at all mean it as such, for I would be quite uncertain at whom to aim an arraignment. Does this state of things exist because the wage-earner and the business man care for no culture and will not have it, or because it has as yet not been offered to them in the right form? Or because we do not in our hearts believe in it for anybody who has energy enough to get something else to fill his life? The business man himself is as shut out (by custom? by his own lack of interest?) from cultural activities, as the grimmest mechanic in an automobile factory. I do not pretend to know what to make of it—whether it is a temporary phase which will melt insensibly into something better when we get around to it, or whether it is an indication of a permanent fatal weakness in our scheme of things. I only set it down here as an invitation to other Americans to look at it, as we seldom look at things we have always seen. We cannot shut our eyes to it, and say that it is inherent in the nature of things, with the Danish folk-schools stubbornly persisting in their success. Human beings are very much alike at bottom,

especially those of the same racial stock. Anybody who has even seen a Danish farm-hand knows that he does not seem any more promising material for cultural life, than any other working-man. And yet Denmark has opened a door to him and he has walked through it. In our country no such door is open (except the always-blessed public library which, can, however, help only the naturally bookish). It is highly improbable that we could open the same door as the Danish one or that it would be the right one here. But isn't it also highly improbable that there is no possibility of opening any door at all?

Are there exceptions to this statement? Yes, a few. There is a just-started folk high school in Brasstown, North Carolina, with excellent plans and hopes. There is in a hamlet in Pennsylvania a "People's College" which is an attempt to adapt to American conditions the idea of a Danish folk-school. Mr. Mathiasen, the head of this unique institution, studied the Danish system before starting his work here, as did the founder of the North Carolina school. He offers to a small group of men and women a course of three months' resident instruction in "history, literature, science, recreation and community life" in a setting of country life and coöperative activities, very much like its Danish original. It is an interesting experiment carried on with devotion and enthusiasm. But the cost of instruction under such a concentrated tutorial system is almost prohibitive. It is naturally impossible to say whether it will lead to anything even remotely capable of coping with our terrific numbers.

There are also certain scattered instances of purely cultural opportunities (generally most appreciated by European-born workers) offered to wage-earners along with instruction in the controversial subjects of economics and industrial and social organization. One of the best is in connection with the People's Institute in New York. This was started in 1897. (Odd, is it not, how many examples of voluntary education began, independently of each other, about thirty years ago? What was in the air just at that time, I wonder? I lived through it, and was stupidly conscious of nothing.) This Institute,¹ the best of its kind, began with the aim of "offering a free discussion of public questions," but it has moved away somewhat from this purely political purpose and now occasionally includes subjects like philosophy, history, psychology, biology, logic and public speaking. In the list of thirty-three lectures in the first half of 1925-26, there were four lectures on poetry, two concerts, and several talks on such generally stimulating subjects as "The Psychology of Superstition," "Will Human Nature Destroy Human Society?" and "The Huxley Family." Among the lectures (five in the course, once a week) offered by the Manhattan Trade School (average attendance sixty people), courses have been given on philosophy, on "Hellenism in Civilization," on science and on literature.

There are other detached examples of cultural opportunities for workers, offered occasionally in various parts of the country; but they are rare, scattered, and

¹ See note on the beginning of study-classes for adults on page 210.

seldom of long duration. Everywhere, when an opportunity for study in adult life is offered, working-people as a rule like almost everybody else in the twentieth century, choose something connected with their work or something which will materially advance their interests.

Does this mean they always will? Or merely that, as any native-born son would seriously put it, "we have not yet been sold on culture?" Of course in the last analysis, it means just one question, a basic one. Is our "culture" alive or dead?

I do not know the answer. Who does? But two guesses at it come naturally into one's mind. One is a guess at a radiant glowing possibility for the regeneration and new life of our culture if it can be extended and widened generally to take in the working-class. There is a left-over, nineteenth-century, middle-class naïveté in the way we always speak and think of the "effect upon the working-class of getting art and education to the workers." It is quite possible that the working-class may have an even greater effect upon art and education, transfusing into their veins the red tide of vitality which annoys us so by continually ebbing away. The mature working-man who listens for a lecture or two to a college professor talking about economics and then, rising, leaves the room energetically, casting over his shoulder earnestly, "Oh, hell, I can't *stand* this!" may do more to electrify a perfectly good professor into real teaching than generations of educational conventions asking themselves what is the matter with our theories of pedagogy.

There are in the very nature of the thing, the most new and beautiful possibilities in the attempt to give intellectual training to a class whose traits of character have always been the foundation-stones of our society. It turns one's head—the chance that to their traditional endurance, steadfastness and grasp on realities may be joined some scholarly, abstract knowledge of underlying principles of science, and some first-hand, honest contact with art. Perhaps our science and art have been so largely barren of deeply human results because their practitioners have heretofore lived in an unreal world, created for them by the labor of others, and have suffered the inevitable sterility which comes with unreality.

A wise man (James Harvey Robinson) has guessed that the flaw in the Greek scheme of society, radiant and living as it was, was the impassable barrier between those who worked and those who thought. Ever since the time of the Greeks we humans have acquiesced, more or less aware of it, in this conception of a society as inevitably divided between the muddy heaviness of lives all work and no theory, and the brittle thinness of lives all theory and no work. One's pulse quickens at the possibilities in any or all of these new educational experiments, whose intention is to break down this tragic old division by opening the world of thinking to people who work.

And yet . . . the tick-tock of the human spirit, swinging from hope to fear, carries one back to the sick wonder if perhaps the virtue has not gone out of "work" in the old sense of meaningful contact with

reality, because the infinitely subdivided work of any one industrial worker is no longer visibly creative. Perhaps working people may not be able to contribute to our collective culture that traditional grasp on reality which has been the priceless quality of their class, because little by little they are themselves losing it. Perhaps workers are turning to abstract ideas and "education" in an attempt to get back from books that deep hold on life and understanding of it which they can no longer get from life itself; and so are simply no better off than the rest of us who have not made a very good job of getting from education what we no longer can get from life.

Odd, that with so many signs to show we are on our way, it should be so impossible to know where we are going.

MUSEUMS

MOST forms of adult education so far devised are variations on the attempt to get the right sort of text-books into the hands of grown people and supply enough good teachers to make sure that the text-books are well used. This dependence on books is natural. Ever since cheap printing left the lecturer only a choice between being an anachronistic bore, or an after-dinner vaudeville entertainer, books have been the schoolmaster's stand-by, the traditional tool of instruction. The modern world, honestly scared by the catastrophe looming before any ignorant democracy, reached for books first of all. How else? In the past, the only people recognized as educated were the book-educated. People who could not use books easily went without instruction. It was taken for granted that if they were fundamentally unbookish they could not become educated.

But modern democracy dares not leave in ignorance a large number of its people. For any twentieth-century country it is a life-and-death matter to educate all its people up to at least a minimum of safety. Yet the attempt to reach that universal minimum finds itself confronted by the granite-like unbookishness of many human minds—none the less real minds though closed to books. Now teachers of little children have long known all about that problem—few little children

can do anything with the abstractions of books—and have worked out a remarkable technique from kindergarten to high school in learning by seeing, by handling, by listening, by doing; but only lately has the idea dawned on educators that as much—even more—may be done for the mature by utilizing three wonderful tools, either new or newly understood, the motion pictures, the radio, and the modern museum.

About motion pictures and radio there is little to say because they are so new to humanity. There is slight basis even for a guess as to what they may accomplish. Great things, that is evident, are among the possibilities. But their possibilities are so untried and so astounding that they have thus far rather stunned than stimulated the imagination of men. We humans need a long time to organize our collective wits when confronted with something quite new.

As for radio, a beginning has been made in broadcasting lectures. Northwestern University presented in 1927 an extraordinarily successful series of talks on "The New Universe," given by the best specialists in the country. The subjects treated were, as stated by the prospectus, "Science, Society, Art, Religion, Philosophy." Inside of two months more than twenty-five thousand people had written to ask for the prospectus, which furnished excellent bibliographies for each subject. This sounds conclusive. But there remain doubts. Can spoken books (for what else are lectures?) reach unbookish minds? Can't anything expressed by lectures be better done by the printed page because a puzzling passage can be read over and over? Or, on the other

hand, does good delivery by an intelligent man really beat punctuation?

All this is subject for question, still. What cannot be questioned or doubted is that the radio has a unique field in broadcasting music. Not just talk about music, such as one finds in books, but music itself. Or better still, music explained and criticized and analyzed by running comments. What it might do to lift the popular taste is dizzying to imagine. It is also dizzying to consider what its possibilities are for degrading popular taste.

Motion pictures also have a great deal to answer for in degrading or at least in satisfying an existing low level of taste. But even now they show some educational tendencies. They must already have done much to create a sense of the reality of geography. This is only an expansion to be sure, of book-illustrations. But how much more vivid and convincing! They may have done a little—not much yet I think because of their conscienceless inaccuracy—towards giving history a visual reality. But their greatest possibility (and the only real novelty) lies in the use of slow movies in analyzing motion—the movements in sports, the unfolding of leaf-buds, the hatching of eggs. One such film, "How Plants Grow," has even had the extraordinary fortune of becoming a real commercial success. This may mean unthinkable transformations in the teaching of many sciences and in all branches of skill, from embroidery to surgery. In a generation or two—or five—such films may be as widespread as the pie-spattered comic, and the galloping two-gun Western. That is not a long time

to wait. What are two or five generations in the history of a race?

But museums are different. Museums are not guesswork, are not even new. They are not like the radio or motion pictures, dauntingly untried, unfamiliar; they are an old, old institution based on an instinct as ancient as mankind; a sure reënforcement in Democracy's battle for mass education; a fresh division already equipped and drilled, marching up steadily from quite an unexpected direction.

Like the libraries they already existed, had always existed, and needed merely alteration and modification. Their reorganization is more nearly complete than we in the United States generally realize. For this is one job that we distinctly did not do: it was done for us. The eagle may scream, justly enough, when free public libraries are mentioned; when it comes to museums he would do well to sit silent on his perch and learn a thing or two from foreigners.

But before we consider what the museum has developed into, let us consider what it developed from. How did it start? Apparently it did not start. There always have been museums.

Alexander's collection of natural history specimens with Aristotle for Curator and the university museum at Alexandria, are the usually cited proofs of the antiquity of the collecting instinct. But in the monkey-house at the Zoo one often has an amused notion that the instinct goes rather farther back than Aristotle. Those preciously guarded piles of broken bottle-ends and bright-colored stones or bits of pottery, earnestly

pawed over from time to time by hairy little hands, have somehow a very familiar look. When one reads a description of the contents of the first museum at Oxford, consisting of "twelve cart-loads of curiosities" collected by a gardener and his son, "principally in Virginia and Algiers," that heterogeneous collection of oddities also sounds very familiar. It was with the nobly conceived "New Atlantis" of Bacon written in 1627 that the intelligent sublimation of the old monkey-instinct to hoard, began its upward flight.

Began its upward flight, did I say? Began to stir in the egg. We have noticed before now in this book how long it takes ordinary humanity to catch up to the creative idea of a first-rate brain. It is not surprising to observe that Bacon's ideal of a museum as a collection of "the things men wish to see and study" took several centuries to ripen into existence. A few superior princes and wealthy aristocrats made "collections" of one kind and another in their own homes, which by and by as such homes became emptied of their traditional inhabitants (or became too costly to keep up) were more or less opened to a very limited public.

To show what was the original spirit towards the "general public" let me quote from the regulations of the British Museum as it was in 1761 when it was, formally, "open to the public":—"Fifteen persons are allowed to view it in one Company, the Time allotted is two Hours; and when any number not exceeding fifteen are inclined to see it, they must send a list of their Christian and Surnames, Additions and Places of Abode to the Porter's Lodge, in order to their being entered

in the Book; in a few Days the respective Tickets will be made out, specifying the Day and Hour in which they are to come, which on being sent for, are delivered. If by any Accident, some of the Parties are prevented from coming, it is proper they send their ticket back to the lodge as nobody can be admitted with it but themselves. *It is to be remarked that the fewer Names* there are in a List, the sooner they are likely to be admitted to see it."

Are you thinking, "But that was in 1761, too long ago to reason from"? Let me make a portrait of a typical old-style museum of the nineteenth century, no longer ago than the period when I was young. As a child and young girl I spent occasional years of my life across the street from the old Hôtel de Cluny in Paris, used to roll my hoop in the dingy little public garden back of it, and to spend a good many leisure hours mooning around its abominably lighted, charming, cluttered, beautifully proportioned, moldy, and musty old rooms. I was very familiar with its moral atmosphere, with its attendants, with the people who used to go in and out of it. My recollection of it is first-hand, disinterested evidence—nothing out of a book.

I have said that museums make one think of monkeys gathering together shiny bits of tin or crockery. The Cluny Museum was rather more like the attic of an old family home, filled with things which nobody had bothered to dispose of, a mixture of moth-eaten miscellanies, and invaluable relics of the past. Many of the innumerable objects which encumbered its dark old rooms were labeled only with a number, which

number corresponded to a similar number in the catalogue. But the catalogue was not free. You paid a fair-sized sum for it. Most casual French visitors who entered the museum were there for an afternoon only, and had a thrifty human disinclination to pay out several francs for something they would use for an hour or so. Many Americans could not read the notices explaining this ingenious system for getting another entrance fee out of visitors, did not know what the numbers on the objects meant, and cared less, being only anxious to get it over with. In short, to the disgust of the attendant who was there to sell the catalogue and take people's umbrellas, few catalogues were ever sold. After years of inert curiosity about what might be inside those yellow fly-specked pages, I myself bought one and found this sort of information, "lock from the 17th. century," "bed of the 16th. century," "pillar found at number 5 rue de Vaugirard."

Deprived of this sort of lucid and enlightening comment and information, most visitors to the museum wandered drearily about, gazing at the multitude of strange objects which must have been for most of them so much meaningless junk. Sometimes a fantastic oddity caught an eye, and the rest of the listless group of sightseers were summoned to look at it. "Oh, see, Maman, the funny little wriggly fish carved on this table leg." Or, "Jacques, come here a minute. If you look at that piece of damask, so, tipping your head over sideways, that bunch of leaves looks like a mountain and a lake and a man in a boat." Oh, I remember very well indeed the comments typical of most of the

people who went conscientiously once or twice in their lives to "do" the Cluny Museum, and who saw to it that their children did the same.

There were, it is true, a few experts who knew all about it and used it as Bacon intended a collection should be used, to further their own knowledge or competence. There were certain sharp-nosed, learned old gentlemen, carelessly dressed, with keen eyes, who gazed through magnifying glasses at special details they wished to verify. There came occasionally a young, enthusiastic student of design, carried away by the wealth of fine decorative models, strewn about among the mere oddities preserved from the past. There came also historians, especially those historians in minutiae which Europe produces so copiously, men with small incomes of their own, who give their heart's blood to discovering the exact date when women's shoes first had heels, and when table legs first had turned ornamentations. The Museum was precious to such gentry, and they knew their way about from long habit, needing no guiding from catalogues, attendants, or labels.

This is a portrait of a well-known museum in one of the great intellectual and artistic capitals of the modern world, as it was at the end of the nineteenth century. How did it get that way? Granted that the collecting instinct is deeply, primitively human, how did Cluny and the other old-fashioned museums like it get their peculiar form and content? There were three sources—or rather two sources and a bombshell. The sources were: (1) The princely art collections—a hang-over into the nineteenth century from the glorious old

days of the divine right of the nobly born. (2) Collections of objects prized for the sake of their age—resulting from the Romantic School's discovery of history and enthusiasm for what it called the "Gothick."

The bombshell was the Victoria and Albert Exposition of 1851.

The museums in the first category date from the beginning of things. In every European country were splendid collections made by kings, princes or ecclesiastics . . . like the Louvre, the Hermitage, the Prado, the collections in Florence and in Rome. When the owners of these collections happened to be moderately open-minded, they allowed their treasures to be viewed occasionally by young artist protégés of theirs, and in small numbers by well-recommended people in good society. Young gentlemen of family, making the Grand Tour with a tutor in the eighteenth century, found no special difficulty in visiting these galleries, but no one dreamed that they might ever be open to common folks. There the art-treasures of the past hung on royal walls, waiting for revolutions, industrial and otherwise, to bring humanity to them.

The objects in such collections were usually pictures and statues, but occasionally there were glass cases filled with those expensive curios and knickknacks known as *objets-d'art*. Nothing was kept because of its age, things not being valued in proportion to their age . . . quite the contrary. Many first-rate artistic treasures were neglected and abandoned to dust and decay because they belonged to bygone generations and were not in fashion.

The exact opposite of these collections (which were the nuclei of our present art museums) were the collections made from the beginning of the Romantic School on, in which originated the modern industrial-art, or folk-art museum. Cluny was wholly a result of the new Romantic conviction that the past was picturesque and the present crass and dull. This was a new idea, and ran over the European world like a forest-fire. Everybody acted upon it in his own way. Victor Hugo wrote *Hernani* because he shared this yearning towards bygone centuries; Horace Walpole filled his house and garden with antique odds and ends; Gautier's admiration for medieval costumes expressed itself in a scarlet waistcoat; and a certain M. Alexandre du Sommerard, zealously, with a pious admiration for anything not new, collected old carvings in wood and stone, old shoes, old locks, old beds, old dishes, old pieces of cloth, old anything at all.

By 1832 he had so many of these miscellaneous objects that he was obliged to find a place to put them, and secured the first floor of the then vacant building which had been the Cluny monastery. Any notion of benefiting democracy was certainly as absent from his brain as any notion of airplanes, and probably would have been extremely repellent to him. He was moved to collect old things by the same spirit-of-the-times which moved Hugo to clothe his dramatic heroes in historical costumes. But see what use was finally made of him and the others like him, by democracy, gropingly gathering together the equipment for its great experiment of one for all and all for one! M. du Som-

merard died in 1842, and the French Government, committed by the example of the French Revolution, which had thrown open the Louvre, took over the collection and occasionally opened it, in the grudging passive way in which such things were "opened" to a limited public in those days.

This same story with minor variations was being repeated in France, in Germany, in England, all over Europe wherever the Romantic School enthusiasm for the Middle Ages had penetrated. Everybody who *was* anybody (and had some extra money) collected "antiques." Everybody's house was more or less of a museum. This seems natural to us, of course, because the fashion has persisted into our own day. But it was then a totally new idea. Never before had anybody dreamed of furnishing his house in anything but the latest style, just as we now never dream of clothing our bodies in anything but the latest style. But along with the historical novel (also new and passionately in fashion) came this new and odd desire to live with objects belonging to other centuries. Did you ever visit, or see a picture of the house and furnishings which were Sir Walter Scott's ideal for a Scotch country gentleman in a very peaceful period of the nineteenth century? Abbotsford begins to look a little queer to us, but it was an established object of admiration to our fathers.

These accumulations of old shoes and old chairs and old scraps of brocade and ancient dishes and armor—above all armor!—for what reason were they being made? Nobody knew exactly. Does any one ever try to seek a reason for a prevailing fashion? Why short

sleeves one season, and long sleeves the next? Idle to inquire. One does what other people do. In the early nineteenth century, as you prospered, you bought a suit of armor for your front hall and an ivy-covered ruin for your flower-garden, as naturally as nowadays you buy a Packard and park it before the house. Then as now your natural wish was to do what would show that you knew and were able to pay for what was what. Of course this was not universally true. Nothing ever is. One notable exception was Hans von Aufsess in Germany, who had a prophetic notion of the immense value of such collections for history study and for general culture, but too far ahead of his time to find a following, he was a voice crying in the wilderness for a whole generation.

Into these heaps of things-from-the-past, preserved for no special reason that was very clear in anybody's mind, exploded a new idea—or rather a new fear—which like a flash of lightning, showed their value.

The new terror was the result of nothing more or less than the Crystal Palace Exposition of 1851. Since we get most of our ideas and traditions from books and periodicals written in English, we have as a rule (in spite of the horrified outcries of Ruskin and the pre-Raphaelites) no idea of the effect produced by the great London show upon the eyes and minds of sensitive and artistic people. We think of it, don't we, as a quaintly old-fashioned affair, the fine flower of Victorianism and imperialism; we stage-set it in our minds with Queen Victoria, dumpy and bonneted, placidly

dedicating it, against a background of complacent crinolined ladies and well-satisfied gentlemen in long side-whiskers, all of them lost in admiration before the wonders of primitive industrialism displayed under the great glass roof. An animated page from out an old copy of *Punch*, that is the Crystal Palace as we look back upon it.

That under some of those Godey's "Lady's Book" clothes there might be highly cultivated connoisseurs with sure and exquisite taste has never occurred to us. But there were—in just about the same minute and saving proportion in which cultivated connoisseurs exist in any group of men and women. They gazed spell-bound at the Products of the Machine. It was in its own language the "first comprehensive Exhibit of what the Machine could do." They gazed and gazed and were perfectly aware of what poverty the show to them had brought. They had not guessed it could be as bad as *that*. They rubbed their eyes and tried to wake up from their bad dream—the people with cultivated tastes and a love for the beautiful in human life—while the Royal Party opened the show, and the band played and the newspaper reporters wrote articles about the grandeur of the occasion, the might, majesty and glory of the Empire, and the Advance of Progress. Up and down the rows and piles and heaps of concentrated monstrous ugliness staggered the esthetically alive members of that generation, paler and paler. They are resting in their graves now, but we can share, a little, what they felt. The illustrated record of the exhibits

in the Crystal Palace Exposition is still extant. To look it through is a terrible experience. Nobody is ever the same man afterwards.

Yes, there is no denying that the Crystal Palace Exposition had a powerful, an inestimable influence upon the world of taste. The dates of the foundation of the various industrial-arts museums in Europe (and England) run almost amusingly the same . . . just about long enough for a terrified esthete to return from London to his native country and let out a yell. These yells were called reports, of course, and the substance of them was what was so lucidly stated in France by the report of the Comte de Laborde and in Germany by that of Gottfried Semper;—the machine-age was not “at hand.” It had arrived. The Hun was not at the gate, he was installed in the living-rooms of the people. There was no time to be lost. To your tents, O lovers of the beautiful-in-human-life!

They went on to report facts which, still existing today, arouse us occasionally from our inertness to a passing shudder: Mankind, they said, was no longer using objects created by the ripe personalities of designer-artisans who, up to that time, after a long apprenticeship, had made such objects. Chairs and tables were no longer designed and constructed by men who had devoted their lives to the question of how best to construct chairs and tables but by mechanics who had devoted their lives to machinery. The same was true of textiles and carriages and dishes and rugs, and every one of the innumerable objects necessary for personal modern life.

And as to what was the result of having the surroundings of our daily lives not only manufactured by mechanics—but designed by them,—the result was spread out to view at the Crystal Palace like a waking nightmare.

In all civilized countries of Europe these reports sounded a tocsin. Not in railroad-building, pioneering America, to which penetrated not the faintest echo of all this stir. The small band of lovers of beauty in every country set to work. The thing to do, they saw, was to commence by preserving every scrap that was left from the handwork of the past—that little-prized handwork, which had always been taken for granted, and never valued save by its own generation. Who, for instance, in the Louis Sixteenth period wanted to clutter up his house with that clumsy old-fashioned Louis Fourteenth junk—not to speak of rough, darkened, out-of-fashion relics from Francis First. Who, nowadays, would dream of wearing crinoline or long side-whiskers? There were, at the beginning of the collecting era in Europe, old family houses where, in various garrets, were stored complete sets of furniture of each epoch, which had been relegated to dust and oblivion by each new bride, just as in old houses now there are odds and ends of old costumes left over from bygone days.

But, as we have seen, even before the Crystal Palace had shocked people's eyes open, the Romantic School had started well-to-do men to collecting "Gothick," like the accumulation of the Cluny, and that of Hans von Aufsess in Nuremberg. These collections were

priceless to the opened eyes which had looked at the Crystal Palace. They were ready-made beginnings for the sort of museums the world needed.

These were, however, not enough. The men of taste of that period felt that every single specimen of good handwork was irreplaceable and should be preserved. It seemed apparent to them that handwork created by artisan designers working freely and unself-consciously in the style of their own period, was something we should never have again. Hence (so they thought) it was obvious that neither we nor any of our descendants would have a new living period-style of our own. The only models henceforth were to be specimens of past styles. Designers were cut off by machines and quantity production from the priceless stimulus of first-hand contact with the materials in which their designs were executed. The only substitute in sight for that lost stimulus was contact with the work of older designers of the handwork periods.

Feeling the importance of preserving every specimen of good style from the past, as the only hope for the future, farsighted artists began a purposeful, intelligent search for left-overs from other centuries. This has had three results: first of all the many many industrial and folk-art museums in Europe and England; secondly the panic admiration of the past and deep distrust of the present from which the museum movement—especially the fine arts—has not recovered to this very day and which tragically hampers and limits them; and thirdly and amusingly, the widespread fashion for “collecting antiques” among ordinary people

most of whom have no notion of what it is all about.

The Crystal Palace Exposition was in 1851. From 1852 on, industrial art museums began to appear in Europe. One of the first and still one of the most important, was a product of the Crystal Palace itself, the great collection officially named the Victoria and Albert Museum, but which we all know as the South Kensington. Astonishing as it seems to people nowadays when deficits are as much a part of Expositions as a Shoot-the-Chutes, the great Exposition of 1851 made an enormous profit. This money was, with enlightened purposefulness, put into the expansion of the Kensington Museum. In Bavaria, the Royal Art Patron, Maximilian II, helped the new movement with great gifts. Hans von Aufsess came into his own. Switzerland and Scandinavian countries as usual had no royal or other great gifts, but pulled themselves along, little by little, more slowly but surely. Some of the most useful though not the largest or richest industrial art museums in the world are now in Switzerland or in one of the three Northern countries. France enlarged the Cluny, created new collections of industrial art as fast as funds could be found, and started the Carnavalet, one of the best city historical museums in the world. Holland and Belgium followed suit.

These new industrial-art and folk-art museums thought they had one main purpose, and one secondary one. Their real purpose has turned out to be something quite different. They thought their main purpose was to provide inspiration and stimulus to craftsmen and designers of machine products; and their secondary one

to accumulate source material for serious students of history and ethnology. Around those two ideas these nineteenth-century museums grouped themselves. There was as yet no recognition of the need for them as part of general mass education. They were not arranged with the slightest intention of suiting the general public's needs or tastes, but as would be most convenient for designers, or most useful for historical students. It was almost a point of honor to pay no attention to ordinary human limitations of attention or interest. People with ordinary limitations were not their concern. Scientific, scholarly men were in favor as curators, men who knew all the possible facts about all their exhibits but knew and cared nothing about human beings; men whose museum-ideal was completeness, a specimen of every period, every artist, every province, every style, all displayed at once; men who had neither burning love for beauty nor any love at all for the public. It was under that régime that those frightful accumulations of anything-at-all were heaped up, along the endless corridors of which we have all with dogged conscientiousness dragged our aching feet and our stunned brains, sandbagged to imbecility by the mere brute numbers of the objects displayed.

Why did we go? We often secretly wondered why we went, to suffer so. My guess is that we ordinary grown-up tourists were drawn into museums, although we did not know it, by the rising tide of the feeling that we ought to go on instructing ourselves, even though we might be grown up and married. Isn't the conviction that one must "do" the museums in the

towns one visits, one of the first generally visible symptoms of the conviction that one ought to go on growing mentally even in mature life? People who would never have dreamed of feeling it their duty to read the "Origin of Species," or Kant, or Shelley, plodded to look at Raphaels and Corregios. The general public dimly recognized museums as one of the best available means of widening their cultural horizons, before curators had any notion that the twentieth century was to expect them to be educators as well as art-experts.

A good many of them have opposed themselves to this demand upon them to be educators for ordinary people, as hotly as the earlier librarians. This was especially true of the directors of art-museums. They felt that there was an impassable gap between themselves—expert art-critics as they were—and ordinary folks; and they felt less than no inclination to bridge over that gap. Why should it be bridged? Whom God has put asunder, let no man join together. Newer spirits among them began to intimate that a complete museum director ought to have some notions of human psychology and the way to handle human beings, as well as all the known information on Goya's brushwork and Ming glazes. They retorted irritably, "But the doors of museums are already open to the public. Anybody who wishes to, can come in. What more can be expected by the most fanatic adherent of the mob? If the public, admitted to the holy of holies of art can do no more than gawk ignorantly, and complain that its feet ache, that does not surprise us. What else could be expected?"

This is exactly the attitude, you will notice, taken

by the older aristocratic librarian. He was there to look out for the books, not for the people who used the books. Let them look out for themselves. The older art-museum directors had an esthetic shudder at the idea of "explaining the exhibits to the visitors." That would be "desecrating the sacred mystery of the relation between the object and the beholder." We owe a great deal more than we ever admit to Ruskin, Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites, but nothing they have done for us is more fruitful than their attack upon this esthetically prudish assumption that nothing can be done to bring an ignorant beholder into better relationship with the beautiful object before his eyes. They not only wrote incessantly with robust good taste and good sense about the relationship between the object and the beholder, but they personally conducted the first known oral courses in art instruction in museums. They did not in the least consider it beneath their dignity to attempt to share with common people something of the joy brought into their lives by art. Their great prestige meant that their example heartened everywhere on the Continent the very few advanced souls who had a heart for the ordinary visitors to museums.

In Europe Germany was and still is the pioneer, and in Germany as elsewhere in Europe, most of the pioneer work has been done by the new folk-art, industrial-art and historical museums, rather than by the older fine arts collections, like those in the Louvre, the Pitti Palace, the Uffizi and the Prado. Those great accumulations of paintings and statues had been created so far back in the public-be-damned period that they

appear to have set, rock-like, in the old mold, and are only now beginning slowly to awake from their indifference to their visitors' psychology and to take the first steps along the path blazed by the newer sort of museum. They have become, so to speak, both fine arts and historical museums—fine arts in what they display, and (in their antiquated method of displaying it) almost perfect historical specimens of what all museums used to be, what none ought to be, and what the newer sort (folk-art, industrial-art, historical, Natural History, etc.) are no longer, in enlightened countries.

The leaders and innovators, feeling their way forward towards a museum technique which would fit the modern world, have tried, as innovators must, all sorts of experiments to reach their ends. What their ends really were they began to see, in the folk-art and industrial-art museums of Germany and Austria, by the middle eighties. At that time two things began to be apparent—first that the wonderful development of photography made it possible for designers to find their models and do a good deal of their studying in books. They no longer came so assiduously to the newly created collections. Secondly, the smaller, less complete German museums found that if they could make their collections of objects intensively utilized by the public they would really accomplish more than could the immense, passive collections in the larger cities. The Hamburg Museum has the honor of first (1885) acting on the idea that the function of the museum is not only to provide models for designers, not only to conserve source-material for historical students, but

to inform the general public and to elevate the general taste. A new sort of official was created, called (since this was in Germany), by the learned name of "docent." His business, a complete innovation, was to be a hyphen between the general public and the exhibits in the museum. In other words the principle was recognized that museums are not only safe-deposit vaults but parts of mass education.

Thus, about forty years ago, before anybody in this country had dreamed of such a thing, the idea of the "new museum" was born. What had been happening in our own country while this was going on? Here are some figures—(up to 1910 no statistics are available, nobody having taken the trouble to find out anything about museums). At that date, there were six hundred collections of things called "museums." Of these, sixty were art museums, three hundred were science museums, one hundred and twenty-five were history, and the rest were marked "miscellaneous." On paper that doesn't sound so unpromising, does it? But go a little farther;—four hundred and thirty-eight of the science and history museums (an immense majority of the whole), were connected with colleges and universities, hence not open to the general public. Of these only ten had a yearly income of as much as a thousand dollars. (Remember that it takes about that sum to run one small plain district school in the country.) Most of them reported an annual income of nothing at all. What were they, these unsupported academic "museums"? Mostly dismal small collections of dusty curios and "specimens" sent back to Alma Mater by traveling

alumni, set about in a room rarely visited. In other words, after one hundred and forty-three years during which museums had been connected with our institutions of learning, they remained practically dead. (Yes, I know, there is the Harvard Museum, the opposite of all this. But there are always an exception or two to all generalizations. Possibly the beginning of a movement for school-museums so admirably developed in St. Louis and Detroit will prove a bigger exception.)

The colleges have not only done nothing at all with the idea of museums as means for education; they have done worse than nothing—they have given that idea a black eye in the popular estimation. Historical and scientific museums should naturally have sprung up in our country alongside the free public school and the free public library as a means towards general education. And they have not. The American public as a whole today, is not only ignorant of the vital importance of visual education, but has an unconscious prejudice against the very idea of a museum.

But this is not as alarming as it sounds. This prejudice does not last an instant once the public is in contact with a progressive enlightened example of a modern museum. There were in this country (again in 1910, the only available statistics) about seventy-six active well-supported, intelligently conducted museums (about one to every million-and-a-half of our population). Every one of them, whether in a great city or a small one, is the center of enthusiastic appreciation of the people about it. Every one of them is supported *by*

the public (not by an institution of learning) either by gifts or by municipal appropriations, which once started never diminish or cease. And the active life of every one of them dates from twenty years ago or less . . . often much less.

They began to live only from the moment when it was recognized by the people that a natural part of public life is good provision for free general visual education; in this following again the course of the libraries which burst into new life, when detached from their exclusive connection with institutions of learning for the young, or with small groups of literati.

As the figures show, our museums are only just beginning to stir in this new life, and are still hampered by two traditions lasting over from the past; the lack of appreciation of the value of historical and scientific museums coming from the complete failure of such museums in colleges, and the high-hat esthetic exclusiveness which still colors the administration of some of our fine arts museums—a provincial imitation of a European tradition now out of date in Europe.

Historical, industrial-art and folk-art museums are, compared to our population, practically non-existent in this country. When I say this I do not mean of course that there is not a single one, although this is almost literally true. There is a notable exception of long standing in the admirable Museum of Cooper Institute, built up on a special line as an aid to the school of design. And we can now, since September 1926 look forward to another very marvelous exception. Mr. Julius Rosenwald, traveling in Europe, turned his keen

modern eye on industrial museums. The effect was startling. Knowing America as he does, her needs and possibilities, the very sight of such museums made it seem incredible to him that his own country had not one. The picturesque, probably apocryphal, story told about him in this connection relates that he walked through the Munich Industrial Museum, and stepping out cabled three million dollars home to Chicago to start one there. Whatever is legendary in this account, the three million dollars are not. The new museum is actually under way, in process of organization, and will, according to the authorities planning for it, be the world's greatest museum of industry. That is, until New York takes alarm at being outdistanced.

In the meantime, most of our larger art-museums have more or less well-developed departments recently added which have more or less extensive exhibits of folk-art and domestic art, such as the newly opened American-furniture wing of the Metropolitan Art Museum in New York; and we have a few half-developed beginnings of historical museums. Of one variety of folk-art museum we literally do not possess a single example . . . and yet it is one which is exactly fitted to our temperament and national history. Just outside of Stockholm, just outside of Oslo, are open-air "amusement parks" where visitors are not shot through space in chutes nor on merry-go-rounds, but are entertained by seeing a splendid open-air folk-art and historical collection of buildings and other exhibits, which illustrate the history of the architecture, of the costumes, customs, furniture,—folk-ways of all sorts,—of their

own and adjoining countries. Precious specimens of fine folk-architecture, well-designed barns, granaries, mills, steeples, as well as all sorts of costumes and tools and furnishings are gathered together there to form a complete picture of one and another period of their history. It forms a spectacle which delights any child, instructs any scholar, inspires any designer, shapes the taste of any observer. All over Sweden and in other places in Norway, similar open-air folk-museums have sprung up, smaller, less ambitious, preserving intimately as food for the imagination and taste of the present, all that has been valued most by the generations gone before.

So far as I know, there is not one such open-air museum in our country, filled as it is with D. A. R. veneration for our short past. And yet, are we not on the very verge of creating them? When some historic personage's birthplace is preserved by a local Women's Club or Historical Society, and filled with furniture of its own period, when Henry Ford "collects" grindstones and stage-coaches, when Doylestown, Pennsylvania, preserves a huge collection of colonial implements, when we read with avidity novels the chief merit of which is to embalm the underwear and house-furnishings of the past, isn't it because we are coming under an influence we do not as yet recognize? Where will the first complete open-air folk museum be established in this country, with log-cabins and Colonial houses, and Indian tepees and all the rest of the enchantingly picturesque material which lies all unused about us? And will the last of the cast-iron front-lawn

dogs, I wonder, have rusted away before it occurs to somebody humorously to preserve one as a sample of the stirring of an embryonic esthetic sense in pioneer America?

Curiously enough, one of the most alive (though one of the smallest and most heterogeneous) examples of a museum as a part of mass education, began as part of a public library. The librarian of the Newark Public Library did not wait for a path to be blazed, but began to shoulder his way through the undergrowth, single-handed. Struck by the limitations of books, and by the possibilities of exhibits of objects as educating tools, Mr. John Cotton Dana found it quite natural to add to the Library museum exhibits of various kinds, thereby throwing orthodox librarians into the utmost confusion of mind. They were dumbfounded by the spectacle of a librarian, a custodian of books, turning himself into the curator of a museum. Whatever could have made him think of such a thing! But in Mr. Dana, looked at as a dynamic part of the surge towards general enlightenment, there is nothing at all surprising. A man of lively creative imagination, he sees (to take one instance) that a visit to an actual room furnished like a seventeenth-century Massachusetts house, gives a better idea of everyday home life of that period, than reading any number of descriptions in the best of books. What, he asks himself, is the purpose of the library in handling books describing historical backgrounds? To make it possible for people to know what those backgrounds were, of course. We call these books successful if they make their

readers see mental pictures of what they describe. But if people can make better mental pictures by looking at something than by reading something, by all means let us provide the something they need to look at. In other words, Mr. Dana does not feel himself a librarian only, but an educator of the masses. He sees that museum exhibits are adjuncts to instruction both for children and grown-ups, as necessary and often more effectual than books.

Feeling this principle as axiomatic, and not finding anybody around him acting upon it, he acts upon it himself and is now running a full-fledged museum on regular Library principles, including the loaning of objects, thousands every year. Whether in the future librarians can possibly add to their activities the running of a museum is one of the thousand questions of technique and method and classification which must be decided by technical experts, as the movement opens out. If libraries don't do it, some organization will. That is evident. In the meantime Mr. Dana, with his unorthodox small exhibits and his wonderfully living museum, has done a very great deal to establish museum exhibits as part of general education.

Our old academic collections of "specimens" may be moldering away in college dust; we may have no adequate folk- or industrial-art museums in this country, and practically no history museums at all, but we have, nevertheless, a few native American pathfinders and roadmakers even in this field. The rapidity with which the few super-excellent Natural History Museums have come into general public favor, shows how

ready public opinion is to welcome the "new museum."

There is no exaggerating, for instance, the impression made upon the general public mind by the energetic, living, creative administration of the Natural History Museum of New York. It has in one generation revolutionized the conception of what museums may be in the minds of the population surrounding it. None of the innumerable people who have visited it can have any doubts about the potential educational value of museums. Every one has taken away in his mind the best possible propaganda for museums, the sight of one which is adequately functioning.

It is true that so far most of the direct, organized educational work of the Natural History Museum has been done for school-children. But that is only a method of approach. We saw in the case of the Newark Public Library, the museum entering the educational field under the wing of the public library, already accepted by the American consciousness. The Natural History Museum and to some extent the Metropolitan Art Museum of New York, like the two fine museums in Cleveland, seem to be sliding themselves forward to their rightful place in general education under the auspices of another generally accepted American institution, the free public school. There can be no doubt that from their different angles, they both aim straight for the same goal, a general recognition of museums (all sorts of museums) as a naturally accepted part of the American effort for general enlightenment.

They are well on their way to such recognition, too. Have you noticed that news from the Natural History

Museum and from the Metropolitan Art Museum is now printed as fully by New York Newspapers as—let us say—news from the universities? Not of course a hundredth part as fully as crime or football news. But that is not to be expected, crime appeals to the emotions, knowledge to the brain. Only a minority of mankind will ever be as interested in self-education as in murders. All that can be hoped for is to find all the minority there is, and give it what it needs.

We have seen that European museums started about twenty years earlier than our own along the new path which leads to a wide popular use of exhibits as a part of mass education. What have they accomplished in their twenty years' start? Uneasily they have moved forward tentatively into the dangerous new ground which, especially in the matter of art-education, is thick-strewn with pitfalls both to sincerity and good taste. Could they, they asked themselves anxiously, without sacrificing everything they cherished, do anything at all with the many-headed democratic dragon shuffling its insistent way into museums as it has into schools and libraries? We have seen that in the matter of history museums, folk-art and industrial-art museums, they have gone ahead without much loss of energy from inner dissensions; but in the matter of art-museums, there has been in spite of Ruskin's example, a long battle about accepting the principle at the base of the whole conception of the "new museum."

In their meetings together, curators, unaware that they were being drawn into the current of a world-wide movement, flung at each other the same old questions

we have seen flying thick about every new development of mass education, "Would you not degrade art by trying to bring it down to the level of the people?" "But on the other hand, could you not bring up the level of the people by opening before them the same doors which have led others to artistic appreciation?" "Would you not breed a new and loathly class, who would think themselves cultivated when they were nothing but pretentious fools?" "But might you not, on the contrary, slowly bring into being that general acceptance of the importance of art and culture in human life which has in the past always proved the best, indeed the only spring-board from which born artists can leap to their great exploits? It has been proved that a general dead black ignorance of the very existence of art is not a favorable background for artistic effort. How about trying (not too much frightened by a by-product of occasional pretentiousness) to make consciousness of art a natural and living part of the majority?"

Forward and backward the discussion raged; and irresistibly the current of the time bore all the disputants onward to the tune of the announcement, "Like it or not. Suit yourselves about that. No matter what you think about it, *it's what you're in for.*"

The last-ditchers are still shouting, but for the most part the technique of European art-museums is following, from a considerable distance, the new technique developed by the historical, folk-art and industrial-art museums. As with libraries where the effort was directed to making the use of books easy for an immensely larger number than had ever used books be-

fore, so in museums the ingenuity of the directors is used to invent new means for connecting intelligently the inexperienced eyes of the general public with the exhibits on display.

They began with labels. You have taken labels as a matter of course, haven't you? But look back at the Cluny Museum of 1900, and guess how "popular" and "demagogic" good labels would have seemed to the initiates of that day. *They* knew by looking at the exhibits, what they were and what they meant. People who were too ignorant to do this would better stay out of museums.

After labels came good, modern, complete catalogues. This was an immense pioneer undertaking, the difficulties of which are too little appreciated by the public. To create them was for museums the conquest of that huge obstacle to adult education which lies before all the other phases of that movement . . . the necessity for a new variety of text-book.

Then, again as in the case of books, the matter of arrangement of exhibits was seen to be a vital part of the abandonment of the old scorn of the inexperienced visitor. The old method of putting on view everything the museum contained was seen to be not only a sin against the very essence of art, but wholly unadapted to the limited powers of human attention. Exhibits began to arrange themselves in new patterns. The hideous ideal of mere size, mere numbers, began to disappear. The conception began to take shape that it might be better to thin out the hundreds and thousands of slightly varying specimens to a few, suitable for a gen-

eral view of any given subject or period, and to put the rest away in archive-storage-rooms, where they could be consulted by students, the only people who really needed to see them.

The very buildings in which museums were housed began to change, as library buildings had changed. There are even no buildings at all in the "outdoor museum" program of the National Parks Association. The idea of displayed exhibits began to untangle itself from its long fortuitous connection with admiration for "The Gothick." Nobody would now dream of putting valuable art objects in Gothic rooms, with small badly placed windows and insufficient air and heat, as in Cluny. Men with creative imaginations began to see an ideal of scientific lighting and of rooms small enough not to oppress the imagination on entering, yet large enough to keep together exhibits with an inner natural unity . . . in other words an ideal of a museum arranged around the idea of the public, not of the exhibits. The benumbing museum of our youth, at the very sight of which we fainted with fatigue, was, so the best minds in the new profession decreed, to become as forgotten a mistake of the past as the libraries where our grandfathers read, which regularly required a day or two days to produce any given volume. The ideal now becomes to induce visitors to love things of beauty, to view them with pleasure, and to depart with a sense of exhilaration.

One European museum after another slowly swung around to steer for the new port, such a very different goal from the old one of getting as many exhibits as

possible. All sorts of experiments were tried in the thinning out and arrangement of exhibits, all sorts of hyphens established between experts and visitors; lectures, gallery-talks, courses of reading, courses of study, personal interviews—all the old educational tools applied to a new purpose. One obvious step they have apparently not even thought of, as yet; the establishment of some sort of intelligent training for the new officers of the museum staffs, the new sort of instructors of the people. It took the libraries too, almost a generation to realize this need; and although we do not realize it, the ideal of thoroughly-prepared teachers still lags far behind the rest of our public-school system.

They began all this growth, we have seen, in 1885. It took twenty-two years for the bare idea to cross the Atlantic. In 1907 the Boston Museum of Fine Arts appointed a "docent" to its staff, the only person then on our continent whose function was not alone to be an art expert, but to share with the general public something of what experts know—one educator in that one Museum serving a population of about a million. But the principle was recognized, and Boston had recognized it first, just as Boston had been the first to recognize the principle of tax-supported free public libraries.

Several years later, the Metropolitan Museum also appointed one docent for its population of three or four millions. (It now has four, one docent for each million people.) You see how close we are to the very beginnings of the movement. Only fifteen years ago, American art museums stood isolated and remote from

the American common people, and took it for granted that that was their natural place in the nation. What has happened in those fifteen years? The same sort of stirring revolution which turned the library world topsy-turvy in the generation before. Let me set down the bare figures of the educational work for adults carried on by the Metropolitan in the year 1924.

More than 50,000 persons attended 850 lectures within its walls in 1924. Eighty-one study hours were conducted for the benefit of 4,000 individuals desiring special assistance. Four instructors on the permanent staff had 840 appointments with 31,000 persons—members, visitors, teachers and public school classes. One met 16,000 teachers from high schools and teacher-training schools, another met 18,000 teachers from the public schools. From the public schools also there were brought to the museum 15,000 children. Loan collections were sent out to 3,000 borrowers. Slides, reproductions and prints lent out numbered 100,000. Eight free concerts, conducted by David Mannes, were attended by 70,000. But the museum, perhaps the richest in the world, has not yet moved from the old museum ideals enough to establish museum branches, obviously a need for an enormous population; and with an annual “possibility of visits” estimated at 30,000,000, it has only just managed to reach one million.

Those 850 lectures mentioned in the previous paragraph were given not only by the four docents on the Museum staff but by outside experts of very high rank; and this is also true of the fine educational work done by the Brooklyn Museum, the Boston Fine Art Mu-

seum, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Cleveland Museum of Art, and the Toledo Museum of Art. These are no amateurs hastily reading up a subject, but experienced connoisseurs, soaked and colored to their last fiber by living with their subjects. Such men, when they look at a statue or picture see in it a thousand meanings and beauties unknown to inexperienced museum visitors. For the first time in America such men are trying to share their sharpened vision, not only with art students, or young critics, but with—anybody who cares enough to enroll and listen, ordinary folks into whose ordinary lives nobody of authority ever before tried to shed an esthetic ray.

In practically every one of our (relatively speaking) few American art-museums the old twilight seclusion is being flooded by this same light of every day. The Museums of Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Minneapolis, Detroit, Baltimore, Toledo and others, are stirring in these new activities. Hardly one of them but has its own variation on the main theme, which would be well worth a chapter in itself . . . such as the Business Men's Art Club started five years ago in connection with the Minneapolis Institute of Art. This is made up of twenty to thirty business men who come to draw under expert teaching. What for? For fun. Instead of going to the movies. You never heard of such a thing in your life, did you? Nor anybody else. But the next generation may not find it so unheard-of, if signs of the time do not deceive us. The history of the Toledo Museum of Art is another

extraordinary incident of pioneering in the new field of democratic museum creating.

Among the rare and unusual educational work they do in Toledo is an evening class in the appreciation of art for business-women, attended by saleswomen and factory hands. In 1924 seventeen members of that class had become so much interested in the subject of their study, that they took the savings from their wages and made an art pilgrimage to Europe. Who went with them as their natural guide and companion? The assistant director of the Museum. When those American wage-earning pilgrims set sail to see the best of Europe, there were no inch-high headlines in the newspapers, were there? And yet they were doing something which would have been unheard-of only twenty years ago. If some of America's extra prosperity can be put to such uses, it may not be the death of us, after all.

There is a fascination in watching the splash of a new idea into our national consciousness, and tracing the widening circles with which it spreads into the big American pool. They are widening fast. When they are only informative as in natural history and historical museums and in such an institution as the wonderful Commercial Museum of Philadelphia, they arouse nothing but enthusiasm. When they touch matters of art, they greatly alarm some of the older esthetes. They do, as a matter of fact, potentially threaten purity of taste and esthetic distinction as all popular movements do; but they are bringing (another function of popular movements) rich new blood into arteries rather

thin, bluish and hardened. Purity of taste is often coarsened by contact with common folks; cut off entirely from that contact, it always becomes sickly and finicking. Here, as everywhere else in human life, the only path to safety is on a tight-rope strung between two bottomless pits.

No wonder there is alarm and hostility among the older esthetes who have never before been conscious of the many-headed as an element in their world. They admit the glorious possibilities for a great regeneration of art in the new ideals; but those possibilities are clouded for them by piercing questions, tragic doubts. They do not realize that their uneasiness, their hopes, questions, doubts, are a part of every thoughtful modern's consciousness. They state in terms of their own profession the problem of the modern world, and think it is peculiarly theirs:—"Appreciation of art is always confined to a minority," they cry, and truly enough, "Why try to force it upon the masses?" They do not see that full appreciation of any of the finest things of life is always confined to a minority, that democracy does not deny that axiom, but is trying, for the first time, *to find that minority*, and not to limit it more than nature has already done.

EVERYTHING ELSE

THIS chapter is a joke. Not a very good joke at that. But, like the playing of the dance-hall pianist, the best I can achieve under the circumstances. The fact is that I have come almost to the end of my space and my endurance, and certainly very close to the end of your interest. And still I haven't begun to say all there is to say. Even though I have but tried to leap from one specially salient crag to another in the voluntary education landscape, a wilderness of unscaled crags bristles about me still.

I have been made painfully conscious of this fact by the comments of my circle of acquaintances during this year of my life which has been occupied by the study of this subject and the writing of this book. A year is rather a long time, plenty long enough for the frequent recurrence of the question, "And what are you writing now?"

The answer, "A book about voluntary education in this country," usually brought forth an astonished stare and, "What? What's *that*?" The further explanation, "Well, adult education then," was generally met by the comment, which came to be infuriating to me, "Oh, yes, the campaign against illiteracy—southern mountaineers' a-b-c moonlight schools . . . Americanization of foreigners. Yes, I know the sort of thing."

I am bound to admit that my impassioned denial that my subject had anything to do with illiteracy or with

foreigners as such and my explanation as to what it really is, usually kindled a gratifying interest in my interlocutor. But I came to dread a thoughtful look in the eye, which soon grew familiar, and the pouncing cry which usually followed it, "Why, of course. True for you! I hadn't thought of it before. But it's a fact that we are all beginning to see how ignorant we are, and are trying to go on learning. I can think of a dozen activities, right in my own small circle that are really educational, and that our fathers and mothers never would have dreamed of taking up." Then I hear about the dozen activities. All of them, as he says, more or less educational. And not one of them mentioned in this book!

I usually try to conceal this last. But in vain. I am always run down by the question, "I suppose you've gone thoroughly into the matter of educational talks at Rotary luncheons, haven't you? *There* is something new in the world of plain business-men!" Or, "I'll be interested to see what you have to say about Y.M.C.A. classes." Or, "I've always wondered how much the educational features of the Navy really amounted to. There's a section of your book I'll be sure to read."

I have too many times been obliged miserably to confess that there is not in my sketchy book, as far as possible from an encyclopædia, even a mention of this or that educational activity which is somebody's favorite. I will not be caught again. I will, to save my face, at least set down the name of everything of which I have heard which I have not mentioned so far.

Here is the list, set down as they come, grab-bag

fashion. Beginning it as a joke on myself, I have ended by being impressed by the number of names on it, the astonishing variety of effort which they represent and the picturesque contrasts between their respective values. Some of them like the International Institute in Williamstown are league-long steps into a wonderful future, so full of significance that a book rather than a chapter should have been devoted to them. Others like the Bureau of University Travel and its imitators are not only soundly and vividly educative, but are interesting historically as direct bourgeois derivatives from the Grand Tour of the eighteenth century when young gentlemen of the nobility traveled under the direction of a tutor.

Others, it will be at once apparent, are set down as samples of the mere clutter of tail-tags which always float behind the rising kite of a new popular fashion. Every one of them, greatly as they differ from each other, has one thing in common. Not one of them could have existed in the enlightened eighteenth century (save perhaps in the very twentieth-century brain of Benjamin Franklin) and few of them would have been conceivable, so short a time as fifty years ago. Imagine an educational agency offering opportunities for study in the prisons which Dickens described! Imagine study courses offered to enlisted men in any army in the days of our grandfathers!

Study courses offered by the Y.M.C.A.

The same offered by the Y.W.C.A., K. of C. and Y.M.H.A.

Study courses offered in prisons, the Army, the Navy.

All the work done by the Field agents of the Federal Government
in rural agricultural education.

Bureau of University Travel (and 'Round the World trips, always provided with lecturers and text-books).

Magazines neither literary in intention, nor printed for a special profession, but purely informative, like the *Geographic*, *Nature Magazine*, etc.

The historical studies carried on under the auspices of Historical Societies of all sorts, and by the D.A.R.

International Institute at Williamstown.

A beginning of an attempt on the part of some colleges (Amherst, Vassar) to interest its alumni in continued intellectual life as offered by the college as well as in college sports.

All the movement for general mass education in music, of which a great deal exists, from the excellently planned work of the General Federation of Women's Clubs to innumerable independent Music-Study Clubs.

The Science Service Corporation (for the popularization of Science) at Washington, under the able head of Dr. Slosson.

Many educational courses in hygiene and principles of health carried on for adults by the Red Cross organization.

The educational courses offered by College Settlements. Some of this is work for illiterates, some for foreigners as such. But there is much of purely educational and cultural value.

Business-men's Economic Clubs.

The National League of Girls' Clubs Schools.

The old Mechanics Institutes with their modern programs.

Leagues for Political Education.

Sunday Schools and Bible Classes for adults.

American Legislators Association—coöperative group of men in the upper and lower houses of state legislatures.

A whole group of enterprises that are on the border-line of the propagandist, but which contain educational elements, such as the National Child Labor Committee, etc.

The entire field of work with the foreign-born, of which there are many manifestations. (See the reports of the Council on Adult Education for the Foreign Born.)

The educational work of the settlements. Hull House is a good example.

The work of the geographical societies, national and local.

All groups of amateurs and connoisseurs, like the Grolier Club in New York.

The international polity clubs.

The Foreign Policy Association with its branches.

Council on Foreign Relations.

The genealogical societies.

Academies of Medicine.

Musical groups like the Friends of Music in New York.

Nature study groups—flowers, trees, birds.

- Little Theaters and other amateur theatricals, including community dramatic performances organized by public school and university extension teachers of dramatics.
- Courses given by the American Savings, Building and Loan Institute.
- Informally organized study groups.
- Group play and recreation activities—Playground and Recreation Association of America.
- Fraternal organizations with lecture courses.
- Preliminary work and national and regional competitions of the Associated Glee Clubs of America.
- Programs of educational committees of local Chambers of Commerce, and of the United States Chamber of Commerce, which latter has just organized a new Committee on Education.
- Preliminary educational campaigns of civic patriotic celebration committees, such as the Massachusetts Bay Celebration Committee of Boston.
- "Adult Education" accomplished through national and regional conferences, conventions and annual meetings of commercial, industrial, trade and educational associations.
- Community organization projects, such as the Cleveland Conference for Educational Coöperation, the Cleveland Education Extension Council, the Buffalo Educational Council and similar groups in process of formation in Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, Brooklyn and Boston, and Dallas, Texas.
- The educational programs of local civic federations. Perhaps the best example of local efforts of this nature lies in the Dallas (Texas) Civic Federation, which conducts the Dallas Open Forum, a Research Library and an Institute for Social Education.
- Certain of the activities of national educational foundations like the Carnegie Corporation, the General Education Board, the Commonwealth Fund, etc.
- Debating Leagues, organized under auspices either of public high schools or of university extension divisions.
- Professional lecture bureau activities in small cities.
- Apprentice schools.
- National and local community center associations.
- Activities of City Planning organizations.
- Activities of Community Chest organizations.
- Activities of Community Trust organizations.
- Prison educational programs.
- Educational programs for sailors.
- Summer schools of natural history, like the one being organized by the New York State Museum.
- Vacation camps and colonies for adults where study courses are offered.

A GLIMPSE OR TWO AT WHAT OTHER PEOPLE HAVE BEEN DOING

To study what has been done in adult education in other modern countries would help us about as much as the study of orange-growing in California would help a Vermont apple-grower . . . *considerably more*, that is, *than the Vermonter is willing to admit*. His alibi of a totally different climate is not the blanket excuse he thinks it. He could, it is true, scarcely hope to combat a Vermont spring freeze even with the most approved California patented smudge-pot; but about coöperative business-methods the Californians could teach him a thing or two that have nothing to do with the thermometer.

If we are to find our way about in the crowded new world made for us by railroads, steamships and the press, one of the necessities is to learn to see what, if anything, there is for us, in the different ways of doing things of different peoples. This is a new problem. Never before did the great masses of any nation so much as suspect the existence of ways of doing things different from their own. To find that there are so many, and that so many (although not like ours) work very well, is disquieting as well as stimulating, is a part of the confusing modern mix-up dumped upon our doorsteps by the printing-press and the steam-engine.

When for instance we had never heard of the Danish folk high schools, we were safe in our assumption that

interest in culture for the sake of culture could never be a natural part of the everyday life of ordinary everyday people. That assumption was restful because it absolved us from any effort to make it possible for culture to enter such ordinary life. It is true that in order to believe this firmly we were obliged to disregard the interest in culture of the millions of members of Women's Clubs; but we managed that very successfully first by not paying any attention to the existence of such millions, and then (when that became impossible) by refusing to admit any motive but pretentious vanity in their efforts to bring into their daily lives some of the elements of civilized existence. The Danish folk high schools began in 1844 and have gone steadily on their regenerating way during the eighty-three years since then. We have had plenty of Danish immigrants among us, during that period. Have we taken the trouble to learn from them anything about their schools? There have been a fair number of American tourists in Denmark during that time. Did they spread among us any general knowledge of a unique cultural activity among the working-people? These questions are rhetorical. It is only very recently, and then in very limited circles that any knowledge at all of the Danish system has filtered in among us. Perhaps one difficulty has been that those schools correspond to nothing in our own national life. It is as though in some foreign country we should see a color, or eat a fruit entirely unlike anything in our own. How can we tell about it? There is nothing with which to compare it.

What exactly are these schools? They are institutions of learning to which go young grown Danish men and women of the working-classes, of their own free will, paying moderately for the privilege of living and learning there, for periods of from three months to six months at a time. They are set in the countryside, homes rather than schools; they are run in the plainest simplest way, with the teachers and students doing the outside work and the household work, together. By this means the cost of the course is reduced to a sum which I do not dare to set down here, because no American could believe that anything worthwhile could possibly be secured for so small an amount. They have no entrance examinations, or any other kind of examination and they give no "credits," provide no diplomas, send their students out with "nothing to show" for their months of study. And yet students constantly fill their halls, and have done so for more than eighty years. They are privately run, that is, they pay their own expenses! Think of any purely cultural enterprise sufficiently valued so that its patrons actually pay for the privilege of instruction!

The purpose of these schools is not to teach anybody how to make more money, nor how to organize society so that he personally or his class collectively can get more out of it. They have the golden, humane, incredible intention of teaching people how to get more civilized enjoyment out of everyday life; how to get acquainted (although I daresay they do not know the words of Matthew Arnold's definition of culture) with "the best which has been thought and said"; how to

avoid (although it is likely that they never heard Darwin's confession of error) the aridity of a life in which music and art and literature have no familiar daily place. Yes, ordinary working-people,—farm-hands,—frequent these schools. About a third of the adult rural population voluntarily passes through this door opening to richer personalities.

But as usual it is hard to explain what anything is without telling how it came to be so. Twenty years after the conception of the folk school, just long enough so that its value as a potential element in national life was proved, came the war of 1864. Danish writers always write with fire upon this theme, the wrongs done to Denmark, the fertile provinces of Schleswig and Holstein snatched away, the anger and despair of a small people defenseless before cynical military power. I can, in one short sentence, sum up all that we need to know of the matter. The Danes found themselves bereft of all national riches save their own people. They had no "natural resources," except the bodies, minds and souls of the Danish folk . . . and, be it remembered, this was not to the eye especially promising material in the 60's of the nineteenth century; as none of "the masses" anywhere in Europe at that date were specially promising to the eye of any save fanatical believers in "the people."

Superstitious, stubborn, backward, ungracious, hulking beasts of burden, they looked to fine ladies and gentlemen of the day, just as all common people did at that period. But such as they were, they were all that was left to Denmark. For once the finest minds

of a country left theory, left the laboratory and the bookshelf, and came out into the hard light of day to struggle with things and people as they are. Danish scientists studied the wretched sandy soil of the Danish heath-lands to see what could be done with it. Danish economists studied the organization of agriculture and coöperative business methods to see what could be done with them. It was found of course, as such investigators always find, that what could be done with anything depended entirely upon the existence of an instructed, enlightened population. There was the job to be done. The Danes bent their backs to it. Danish men of letters, and scholars laid down their abstract studies and harnessed themselves not very cheerfully, for it is the hardest of life-sentences, to the job of trying to get valid instruction and enlightenment to a people who had not had a fair chance at it.

During two or three generations of the nineteenth century, in the period which we occupied by developing industrialism and in spreading ourselves out very thin over vast spaces of the West, the Danes did their pioneering deep in the hearts and minds of their people. They pulled themselves slowly and surely up to a higher mental and moral plane. While we set out to lay railroads to the coast, to bring movies to every village and automobiles to every farmhouse, the Danes set out to make themselves over. The results begin to show in both countries. On the whole, people get what they try for. We now have just what we set out to secure, railroads to the coast, movies in every village and an automobile in every farmhouse. The Danes,

from being superstitious, backward hulking beasts of burden are now quite universally acknowledged to be "the most widely cultured nation of Europe"; the nation where the highest level of scientific agriculture exists; certainly the people who have developed to the highest degree the difficult ability to act together harmoniously. Their famous system of coöperative action in farming and selling has been mystifyingly successful to their rivals, who with infinitely better climate and soil have seen themselves left far behind in the field chosen out of their dire need by the Danes.

Our farmers could learn from the Danes how to revolutionize our agriculture; our professional educators of the young would find the time well spent in studying the admirable system of schooling which leaves only a minute percentage of illiteracy in the nation; but for us in this book, the item of interest is their unique contribution to the cause of voluntary adult education.

It took scientists to analyze Danish soil; disinterested economists to clarify business organization; professional educators to create their excellent system of public schools for children; and a man like the inimitable Grundtvig, "at once poet, historian, church-reformer and man of the people," to invent the folk-schools. His purpose was not new. In his own words he meant to found schools the aim of which was not "examinations and an assured livelihood, but education and enlightenment for its own sake." Very threadbare old phrase, that, to be found in every college and prep-school catalogue in our country. But Grundtvig seems

to have meant what he said. And to have been taken literally by his own people. Into those pleasant home-like buildings, set in the midst of the Danish countryside go, of their own accord, "peasant" young men and young women, the men for at least two periods of six months' residence in the winters, the women for two periods of three months in the summers, an arrangement only possible of course in an agricultural population. What do they study? What do they learn? As far as the acquisitive meaning of "study" goes, in the sense of getting through with a subject and having some proof of it in a certificate, they study nothing. And as for learning, they "learn" appreciation and enjoyment and understanding.

They live for months at a time with the cultivated kindly men and women who are their teachers, live and work and play and talk with them and with each other, most of their waking hours. Under the guidance of these teacher-friends, they study, seriously study, history, literature, poetry (especially poetry, glory be!), natural sciences, mathematics, music and sometimes design. The odd thing about the matter is that these subjects are not shut up like dangerous creatures in the class-rooms when the students leave their classes. They are among the topics of general conversation every day. We have, whether we admit it or not, a despairing feeling that if we are to have any "real conversation" about ideas, about civilized subjects, we must pay for it by resigning ourselves to the society of freaks, or professional rebels, or priggish high-brows, or at least strange unbalanced oddities among the hu-

man race. Think of talking easily and naturally with a group of normal, quiet-minded, self-supporting human beings, about literature, history, science, mathematics and art, at table, and in long intimate evenings before the fire, of winter evenings! Think of singing, in harmony, fine old folk-songs, on your way to the skating pond! Conversation, admittedly the fine flower of any civilization, blossoms up out of the stuff of their day's routine because in the day's routine there is food for all the man.

They have outdoor work, outdoor fun, much singing in common,—produce constantly the only companionship of value, that which grows out of some common effort. They have, in short, quite simply and naturally, with no fuss about social forms, months and months of really civilized life, sanely divided between work and study and play, perfumed by elevation of thought and richly colored with esthetic appreciation. One of every three Danish country-dwellers has had a full year of this. Farm-hands! How many months of such a life have you known, my American reader? I know all too well the limit of my own participation in any such group life.

What is the result of sixty, of eighty years of such opportunities? Everybody knows the material results of the general Danish system of education and industry;—from being a poverty-stricken, defeated, prostrate country, marooned on a spit of sandy land in a harsh climate, they have become one of the most prosperous, advanced, secure and progressive nations in the modern world. So much can be weighed and measured, in ma-

terial results. As for other, deeper effects on national character, let me quote something which was said to me only the other day by a Danish working-man of my acquaintance, who had recently gone back to Denmark for a visit to old friends.

"My gracious!" he said earnestly and wistfully, "it seemed awful good to be where the folks *talk*."

I don't think I need make any comment on that illuminating statement.

We Americans may have been impervious to the example of the Danish People's High Schools, but not all countries have been. A generation had not gone by, before Sweden was stirred to action, and began to create folk-schools of its own, here and there in its country-side. But Sweden unlike Denmark had not been clutched by the throat by adversity and thrust into a wisdom far ahead of its time. It was not till after 1900, when the idea began to filter dimly into everybody's mind, that Sweden began to realize that every nation, even when it has not been despoiled by a neighboring brigand, has no natural riches to compare with its people. Folk high-schools had been organized on the Danish model and functioned competently; but no Swedish farm-hands or poor farmers profited by them. The students were the cherished sons and daughters of well-to-do farmers, who were obliged to make neither effort nor sacrifice to give a year to the delightful folk-high-school life. Sweden is a "naturally aristocratic country," as Swedes of a certain kind are very fond of telling you. Consequently the children of

poor people and small cultivators came and went outside the doors of the so-called folk-school, unbidden.

As always happens when there is such a restriction of class, the schools suffered quite as much as those shut out of them. A certain static dry-rot, by no means unfamiliar to our own middle-class institutions of learning, settled dustily upon the Swedish people's high-schools in spite of the devoted efforts of the teachers. I won't go so far as to say that there seems to have been as much as in some American colleges because that would be going rather far. They always had more music, literature, and outdoor work, than in an American college. But they could not compare in vitality with the much less well-endowed Danish folk high-schools.

In 1906, a Swedish poet (apparently it takes a poet) founded in Brunnsvik a real sure-enough people's high-school, with modern social ideals. It was to the tune of alarmed hostility and opposition from conservatives. It has prospered greatly, is crammed with bonafide workers, the opposition has died down, and, again as always happens, a courageous breaking of windows has let in fresh air to many more people than the breaker's own group. All the Swedish folk-schools have profited by the fresh waves of interest, brought in by the Brunnsvik innovation, all are on a more liberal and more living basis.

To report thus, nation after nation, what is being done in adult education the world around would require of course a large volume rather than a small chapter. And except for the purpose of coming up to

the academic ideal of "completeness" there would be no point in mentioning work accomplished by about the same educational methods as our own, which are in very common use everywhere in all civilized modern countries (at least in those moderately to the north). We see everywhere an excellent variety of schemes for the continuation of intellectual life among grown-ups—courses of lectures, night-schools, "workers' libraries," open forums for discussion (these more or less cautious according to the prevailing tone of the nation), reading-courses, study-circles. As far as my information goes, these seem to be mostly connected with the general idea of "raising the masses" and afford another proof that the naïve satisfaction of the middle-class with its own degree of culture is by no means confined to our American realtors; show us again that our American college graduates are not the only people in the world who, on Commencement Day, close their books and their minds with a thankful slam.

I turn away with regret from the interesting things being done on the Continent. Czechoslovakia, for instance . . . how rich and strong the young life-blood is running in that vivid new country! Coming full-grown to the democratic table, with what hearty appetites the new nation is falling to! In many ways the Czechs make the U. S. A. look like a doddering toothless old conservative. You will remember perhaps what they have done with the free public library idea. And Belgium here as always in the forefront of modern advance; and many others. But whatever else is left out because of the limitations of space, the work being

done in England must not be omitted; not only because it is excellent and better than our own, but because like that of the Scandinavian countries it is different from our own.

In the first place the movement for adult education has been going on in the British Isles for a long time, since fairly early in the nineteenth century. But this does not mean what it would have meant in America. In England it has been part of that general nineteenth century push towards a higher general level of intelligence which in our country was limited almost entirely, until very recently, to obtaining universal free schools for the young. Limiting our national effort to that, we secured it long before the British Isles. Scattering their efforts and diffusing their energies with a characteristic British dislike for narrow specialization, the British have obtained in the matter of a free public school for every child no such clean-cut decisive victory as the United States. But they have constantly given the matter of adult education more attention than we, from better minds and greater institutions of learning. Oxford and Cambridge have been active from the first. Ruskin was one of their pioneers.

They had succeeded in establishing a tradition of adult education by the end of the last century which is about the date for the very first glimmerings of such a tradition for us. The names of the different agencies which have accomplished that show how the movement differs from ours. We have seen for instance that "workers' education" in our country is the most recent development, hardly started as yet, preceded by free

public schools, free public libraries, Women's Study Clubs, free state universities, and contemporaneous with such recent activities as Child-Study Groups, and the growth of museums as tools for mass education. Here are the names of some of the first English organizations for adult education:—"Working Men's Colleges, Workers' Educational Association, the Labor College, the Adult School Movement, the Coöperative Movement." And yet side by side with these names connecting the movement with the working-classes, first and greatest among them is the University Extension Movement.

We make, in regard to the English Universities, our usual American error in judgment. We are always being disconcerted by British social phenomena which frequently seem to add up items familiar to us and produce somehow a total wholly unexpected and almost incredible. The two older English Universities we label confidently as strongholds of bygone, aristocratic, class, gentlemanly narrowness. But they take, and have from the first taken, a more useful and authoritative part in adult education for working people than our own. About ten years ago shaken by the revelations of the war, the English government appointed a Reconstruction Committee. One of the first things they did was to appoint a sub-Committee to see what could be done for adult education. And who was put at the head of it but the Master of Balliol? Our recent action in putting Dean Russell of Teachers College at the head of our own brand-new national organization for adult education is a tardy imitation of a splendid

British example. We could moreover have no better basis for our attempt to deal adequately with the matter than the confession of faith made by the Master of Balliol in his official report:—"Adult education must not be regarded as a luxury for a few exceptional persons here and there, nor as a thing which concerns only a short span of manhood. Adult education is a permanent national necessity, an inseparable aspect of citizenship and therefore should be both *universal and lifelong*."

It is on such a finely intelligent recognition by its best minds of the importance and dignity of adult education that the English are building themselves up.

What, in actual fact, has come out of such an attitude? As might have been expected, something sounder, more coherent and more thorough than anything we have as yet, than anything we are as yet prepared for.

Here is the definition of a "University Tutorial Class," which is the most widely used form of English adult education. "A University Tutorial Class is a body of men and women, not exceeding 32 in number, which meets for three successive years, usually in the winter, and holds in each year 24 meetings of two hours each.

"Tutorial classes aim at a high standard of continuous study, and demand serious reading and regular written work from the students. The course of study is a matter for discussion between the students and the tutor in coöperation. A tutor acceptable to the class is appointed by the University Joint Committee, which also provides a library of books bearing on the subject of

study. The detailed arrangements of a tutorial class are in the hands of the students themselves. The expenses are met from three main sources: (1) contributions from universities and colleges; (2) grants from the Board of Education; (3) grants from Local Education Authorities."

An American who has been looking into the sort of intellectual life promoted by our own adult education, feels like capitalizing every other phrase in this matter-of-fact definition, and putting an exclamation point after the whole . . . "THREE successive years, TWENTY-FOUR meetings of TWO hours each . . . CONTINUOUS study . . . SERIOUS reading . . . REGULAR WRITTEN work!"

We have in the course of this book, skimmed far and wide over our country, and glanced in upon all sorts of spontaneous attempts by our people to continue intellectual growth. Have we caught one glimpse of any such intellectually serious group-life as that? It is sobering and steadying and stimulating and humbling to learn that it exists anywhere on the globe, as free as our own much-vaunted public schools for children, the subject of thought and effort by the finest University-bred men in the world, accepted and utilized by self-supporting men and women of our own race.

In making such worthwhile intellectual activity freely possible for any one who cares to have it, the English have not forgotten the needs of people with less time and less intellectual ambitions. They have what they think is a light and easy program in their "one year classes under a teacher." This is what they

call "light and easy"—"By one-year classes we mean classes arranged for a session's work and usually meeting 20 to 24 times. Where circumstances are favorable, the writing of essays by the students may be an integral part of the work of a class. Not infrequently a one-year class reassembles with practically the same personnel for a second or third winter. The one-year class is an extremely important instrument of adult education and not the least advantage of it is its adaptability to different sets of circumstances." This is still beyond anything within the easy reach of our people.

The English "study-circle" more informal than either of the above-mentioned classes, sounds more familiar to us and seems like our Women's Study-Clubs, meeting from house to house of the members, reading, studying, and discussing together, but mostly without trained leadership. Of these the British Adult Education Committee says, "Whilst study circles rarely reach a high level of sustained study, they are a valuable introduction to more systematic study and discussion, and they are easily brought into existence," a more honest and judicial estimate of value by a first-class authority than I found anywhere in the United States about Women's Clubs. We recognize in another English activity the original of one of our own most promising experiments. "Under the auspices of various University Joint Committees, summer schools for tutorial class students are held in the long vacation." And, "the University Extension Movement has, for many years, held summer meetings alternately at Oxford and Cambridge. These meetings are attended by

large numbers of extension students." This is, of course, the successful example which the organizers of the Bryn Mawr summer school for working-girls probably had in mind.

Have I set down enough facts to show the general character of the development of adult education in England, so different from its history in our own country? It has been marked by the recognition of the best English educators at a time when our own were still absorbed with the educational needs of the young. From the first the movement has been guided by responsible intelligent leaders, who know what intellectual life is, rather than left to the helpless, fumbling, earnest efforts of aspiring uneducated people, or to the commercial instincts of shrewd men with both eyes fixed on profits.

If I were writing about public schools and the general provisions for the care, health and education of the children of the poor in country and city, I should have quite another sort of comparison to make between the two countries. Even in the adult education field those excellent and to-be-envied English tutorial classes do not begin to reach even a tiny fraction of the vast numbers which in America we must brace ourselves to meet in each and all attempts to raise the intellectual level of our people.

In Europe only the countries with small populations dare as yet dream of trying to reach *all* their people, as has been our terrific Promethean American aspiration. In talking with Europeans of more populous nations we constantly find that, even now, in regard to what

is known as "the common people" we speak another language. When we speak of reaching "all the people" we simple-heartedly mean all; and when reminded of our grievous failure to do so, we rend our garments in sincere remorse and with that innocent ignorance of the vastness of our undertaking which may yet be the saving of us, cry out, "Give us yet a little more time and we *will* reach them all." When Europeans (I mean the majority of people in each case) speak of reaching "all the people" they consciously make an unspoken exception of a considerable submerged class which they never expect to reach, take for granted can never be reached . . . do they really wish to reach them, I wonder? They naturally suppose that as civilized disillusioned modern humans we will understand that they have made that unspoken exception. But we do not understand any such thing.

From this misconception comes our inability really to understand the meaning of their figures and facts. A very enlightened, generous-minded Englishman of my acquaintance, considered radical and ultra-modern by his friends, once said to me when I had made some casual remark about the density of population in England, "Oh, but there *are* quiet spots left. In our own country home, for instance, my wife and I have sometimes spent a whole fortnight without seeing anybody at all." My stupefaction at this statement showing itself, no doubt, in my face, he caught an annoyed glimpse of my literal-minded misunderstanding of his phrase and added hastily, "Of course, except the trades-people!"

It is just as well to bear in mind this constant possibility of misunderstanding when comparing British facts and our own, otherwise after these splendid reports of serious voluntary study among English adults, so much better than our own, we might be too greatly disconcerted to hear some figures on the educational level of London slum-dwellers and English farm-laborers. It is impossible to compare minutely in any one particular, two nations differing so wholly in general social make-up. With all the profound significance involved, for good and evil, the ordinary natural educated Englishman when he says "everybody," does not include scrubwomen and street-sweepers and dock-hands. And the ordinary American quite naturally does. Why not?

How many English men and women are reached, do you suppose, by this excellent tutorial class system, with its high standards? *About thirty thousand*, an almost imperceptible proportion of the adult population of the country.

But bearing this caution in mind lest we fall into unwarranted discouragement, it can be nothing but very salutary and chastening to our uncritical American souls to look from the sound, patient, thorough, dignified methods which lead the British movement, back to our own slap-dash, energetic, unguided adult education movement, struggling its way up (we hope!) from commercialism and ignorance.

SOME LAST GUESSES

THE traditional title for the last chapter of a book is "Conclusions." But it would take a bolder hand than mine to write "conclusions" at the top of a page which can, in the nature of things, contain only possibilities. Unmanageable swarms of possibilities tumble pell-mell into the head of anybody who gives even a look at the movement called "adult education." One's imagination is swamped under their numbers and variety . . . some of them magnificent, some terrifying, some almost hysterically amusing, some dreary and drab . . . all of them hypothetical.

The only certainty is that however reality develops, the generation which experiences it will take it quite for granted, as the natural order of things. The little boy who asked his mother if people didn't feel queer for the first few days after they were grown up knows better by the time he himself is a grown-up. Do we not, now, today live in an epoch which is at once magnificent and terrifying, madly comic and drably dreary? But do we extract excitement, laughter, exaltation and despair from the world about us? Mostly we plod steadily forward earning our livings and raising our families against the background of a world which may by no means seem to us the best possible, but merely the most entirely natural, the only to-be-expected one.

It is certain that however the new movement for continued mental growth may develop, our grandchildren will see little that is surprising or picturesque in it; just as now without turning a hair we can pass a beautiful, airy, well-planned expensive building, humming full of well-dressed, well-fed children learning at public expense what Charlemagne of the glorious white beard never dreamed of knowing. Or as we can, with no more than an unsurprised grimace of resignation, see the same children pouring out of a movie-house where we know their minds and hearts have been fed on concentrated essence of second-rate cheapness (to take the most cheerful view of the matter). It is well to throw such a cooling wet-blanket upon one's imagination when it begins to glow incandescent over the possibilities, good and bad, of the adult education movement. We see them now as black, or white, or sunrise pink. To our grandchildren they will of course be mere ordinary daylight.

I don't suppose for instance that it will seem at all funny to them if libraries and university extension courses take a leaf from the book of soap-manufacturers and correspondence schools. We have seen that there are a mere beggarly two hundred thousand students in University Extension courses, and two million in correspondence schools. The advertisements of the University Extension Courses are simple statements of the bare facts and cost a tiny percentage of their total expenses. Do you remember from the chapter on correspondence schools, the tremendous sums spent on expensive advertising and highly paid "salesmen"?

We may yet see great sums left by public-spirited millionaires to "sell culture" by advertising it . . . if that really is the only way to make an impression on the collective modern mind.

The advertisements in the air-busses which our grandchildren will patronize may well read, "Do you feel dull and listless on awaking in the morning? READ MONTAIGNE as a night-cap, if you want to know the savor of life as lived by a rich brain and colorful temperament. Send us a post-card with ten cents and we will deliver a pocket edition at your door."

Or, "What are you going to do in the half-hour before dinner tonight? Try one of BACON'S ESSAYS and see if its wisdom doesn't cast a light back upon the events of the day in your office? Patronize your own branch library. You'll find the Essays there."

Nor will our descendants perhaps find anything odd in seeing on the screen which descends between the different parts of a movie, exhortations to,

READ MORE POETRY.

It keeps your heart alive.

You will love your family better if you read more Wordsworth at least once a week. Splendid new Wordsworth anthology will be sold in the lobby as you go out, at the cost price of fifteen cents each.

Or, "Why did you stop studying mathematics? IT WAS A MISTAKE. Join the course on trigonometry now being organized at Public Education Center, No. 367, and see how a crack-a-jack teacher can make your gray matter

sit up and take notice. You owe it to yourself not to let your brain atrophy. Let our Mr. Brenner call on you to talk mathematics." In small type, "Adv. paid for by the J. L. Parkman Fund." Or, "Latest bulletin in the competition between the class in 'History of Art' and 'Civil Engineering' shows Civil Engineering standing at 92 per cent steady attendance at classes, History of Art, 90.3. The prize offered by the Welfare Foundation is a trip to Siam for the winning class, under the direction of the great archæologist Professor Merton."

If any of us are still alive, aged frequenters of the movie-of-the-future, our octogenarian cackles or shocked exclamations will be the only laughs or comments heard. Every one else will take culture-advertisements as a matter of course . . . "You must understand," they will explain to us as the members of all classes always do, "that the members of *our* class in society don't need such signposts and reminders, but for the common mass of humanity, they are very useful. Laboratory tests established the fact that it was impossible in the twentieth century to dispose of even the most primitive necessities of life like shoes or undershirts without extensive advertising. Why should one think that education could be widely spread without using the same means? Why leave all the good tunes to the devil as a monk in the dark ages of Europe is said to have asked?"

After such a light-minded flight into the future as that, perhaps one's imagination betakes itself to deeper

thoughts, golden hopes. A good many of these golden hopes center about the struggling, hard-beset art of teaching, which has been painfully keeping itself alive throughout many centuries of underestimation and neglect. Pedagogy may be at last recognized for what it is, the foundation of human progress. The sane development of mental tests may bring it out of the fog of uncertainty in which it now gropes along, led only by occasional flashes of intuition on the part of occasional teachers of genius. Its forward impetus may be forty times what it is now, when it is unburdened by the present killing necessity of trying to force the wrong subjects down the wrong throats at the wrong times. Above all, it may be helped by such text-books as we have not yet dreamed of, new productions of the human brain, books based on sound knowledge not only of the subject taught but of the psychology of learning.

Let me repeat once more that of the many elements needed to make a success of mass adult education there is none more vital than the need for the right kind of books. Up to our times, there have been two classes of students; (1) children, and (2) specializing scholars intending to make a profession of what they learned. The books which have served more or less well for them will obviously not do for the new type of student whose mind is too mature for the A B C's of the elementary text-books but whose information is too limited to use the technically complicated books studied by specialists. During the nineteenth century a deadlock on this point seemed

imminent. The human mind balking stiff-leggedly as usual over a new possibility, braced itself against any change. The majority of the learned and all of the supercilious cried out that it is in the nature of things impossible to write text-books which are at once sound and also interesting to ordinary mature normal minds. Only specialists and professional students *could* learn from scientific or advanced treatises. A black pit seemed to gape between genuinely learned men and ordinary people. Across this a few ordinary people ventured to inquire, "Even if we did not learn every detail of your learning, couldn't we learn enough to get the general sense of it? It might help us to avoid some of the fool mistakes we now make in our daily lives."

Nothing brought out a louder clamor from the "pure" scientists than this impure question. From their indignant protests the ordinary mind has gathered (though possibly this is not what the learned meant to convey) first that perhaps there is no general sense or meaning in their learning, and secondly that real scientists like art-for-art's-sakers and practitioners of mystic contemplation, would perish of indignation if asked to help ordinary people avoid fool mistakes in their daily lives.

But presently some of the finer minds among the learned began to ask themselves, "Is there perhaps a general sense to our learning which we might communicate to others, which we ourselves don't see very clearly because we are drowned in details? Perhaps it might be a good mental exercise to try to unravel

general notions, to try to present as artists do in a sketch an impression of the subject which will be truthful though not detailed?"

At first the majority of their generation shouted down such radicals as demagogues. This was natural. Learned men, as the name implies, were a race—a noble race—of learners whose sole tradition was to acquire more understanding for themselves. Democracy raising its shaggy head above the ocean of unconsciousness, suddenly called upon them to be teachers, a calling for which they had no training or liking. They resisted, thinking they defended sacred possessions. Not wishing to teach, themselves, they protested against the very idea. They cried out passionately that to teach would be to sully learning.

Democracy was not articulate enough to argue with them. It only leaned its vast bulk silently up against their barriers and began to push. And the barriers began to crack. We are beginning to see the answers to the demand for a new kind of books from which ordinary grown-up people can learn. There was a running fire of small books, "People's Universities," tentative shots at the new target, and then with a whizz, Wells' "Outline of History" sped to the bull's eye. We can all remember the astonishment over the wonderful sale of that history written by a novelist. Whoever would have dreamed that so many people would *buy* a long history of the world and read it? Large sales have a wonderfully stimulating effect upon the human imagination. All sorts of outlines have come in, more or less successful; history is in fashion; biog-

ographies sell like detective stories; books like de Kruif's "Microbe-Hunters" reach thousands. But as it takes at least a generation for human brains to assimilate a new idea, it is probable that not until the boys and girls now in our school-rooms are grown up and writing books, shall we begin to see a new class of great men emerge, standing on an equal footing with the great scholar-as-learner who has so long received our veneration—a class of *great* scholars-as-teachers. When first-rate minds set themselves at first-rate tasks under favorable conditions, great results are apt to follow. Until the eighteenth century, the world had never conceived of such a thing as a great novel. It may be that the twentieth and twenty-first will bring forth a crop of text-books throbbing with the same cosmic energy which informs all great productions of the human mind.

The breaking-down of the primitive tradition that learning is only done during youth may also have incalculable effects upon the art of teaching as a whole, as well for children as for adults. No longer forced to try to cram into heads under twenty-one all the factual information they will ever need, teachers may, as their own minds expand to the new freedom, turn to their real task, the awakening, encouraging and judicious feeding of intellectual curiosity and activity. Naturally this would wholly transform the relation between teacher and taught. Ask any experienced, mature teacher today, if he were confronted by a class all of whose members ardently desired to learn what he had to teach, what he would do. He would probably answer,

"Drop dead from astounded joy." The teacher of the future may take such a condition quite calmly as a self-evident necessity of his art, and will look back with wondering pity at the tragic moral atmosphere in which the teacher of our times does his work.

This means that one of the greatest results of free public mass adult education may be the gradual reconstruction of free public mass education of children. Heaven knows it needs reconstruction. Certainly as the demands of modern life for trained intelligence grow more drastic the fantastic absurdity of stopping the process of learning on Commencement Day is now apparent even to the blindest. As adults more and more expect to go on learning, children may be less and less treated like small valises into which provisions for a long journey must be stuffed, no matter how the sides may bulge. Wherever the new reliable information about child-psychology has penetrated and created new ideals of life for young children, early childhood has been authentically transformed from a time of anger-storms, terrors, hysteria, misunderstandings and steadily recurrent sicknesses, into a comfortable phase of steady growth and sunny quiet happiness. It is possible that through the disappearance of Commencement Day with its present sinister meaning, much of what now darkens and troubles the whole enterprise of education may fade away.

Every age has had its own art, the art which best expressed its aspirations. The art of the next century or so may be the art of teaching. Why not? To mold human beings into their finest possibilities involves the

same epic struggle to create beauty and harmony out of stubborn material limitations which is the foundation of all great art.

But there are hideous dangers in the movement as well as magnificent possibilities, and there are sick moments when in spite of all efforts to be stout-hearted one sees nothing but those dangers. These are like the moments every one knows when watching beside a child, feverish with a cold, the imagination leaps forward to the worst, and for a horrifying instant the watcher actually sees him in the clutch of a fatal pneumonia fighting for his last breath. That is a real danger, not an imaginary one. The question is always, will his natural vitality pull him through?

Will our human vitality pull us through? Perhaps we and our descendants may fail to rise to the possibilities of the new situation. It is a fable that people always somehow inspiredly do what is the right thing for any given crisis. Very often they do nothing of the sort, and lacking intelligence, vitality and persistence enough, sink beneath the weight of circumstances not at all necessarily fatal. What happened to those gifted Cro-Magnons?

What are the new circumstances in our situation with which we must cope? First of all, immensely greater complication in our daily life. There are incalculably more people, more things, more activities and millions more new impressions in the daily life of every man than there were in the daily life of any man before the days of quick communications. Now some individuals, sud-

denly set from simple lives into complex ones, master the complexities and achieve orderliness. But others do not, lose all sense of proportion, direction and values, and sink into idiotic bewilderment or worse. To learn how to cope with complex lives instead of simple ones is thus one of the greatest needs of ordinary people of our time and to teach this is one of the greatest services which more education can give them.

But it takes genuine education, not the mere acquisition of more information, to enable people to order their lives intelligently. Perhaps we may not succeed in getting enough genuine education to survive. It is quite possible. Perhaps we shall fail to grow mentally enough to take care of ~~ourselves in~~ a world so much farther away from ~~primitive con-~~ditions than any as yet encountered by humanity. Modern improvements, the ten slaves (or is it forty?) given us by modern conveniences are nothing but helpless tools. If used by stupid, narrow, intolerant minds, they can but create stupidity, narrowness and intolerance more rapidly than was ever before possible. So rapidly indeed that the necessarily slow growth and general spread of intelligence and broad-mindedness may never catch up with them. Together with the inevitable human pleasure in superiority which is implied by the denunciation of mediocrity, it is undoubtedly this danger which drives to a frothing madness of alarm the Jeremiahs and pole-ax critics of our present times. Their alarm does great honor to their hearts and their innate love for humanity. Really hard-boiled cynics would not

care a hang, even if they felt sure that we shall in the long run make no better job of general mass education for adults than we have for children. If this does happen, it will be for one reason, *a decisive one*:—because there are not enough first-rate minds scattered among the race to cope with the vast numbers involved in any attempt at mass planning. Are there? Who knows?

We may not be able to find and enlarge the minority of “the chosen” sufficiently to leaven the lump of the whole, enormously larger than it ever has been before. Cheap universal literacy and rubber-stamp ideas may really be the mouse brought forth by our mountain in labor. Dogmatism, intolerance and provincial self-admiration may be the qualities spread by our idea-communicating machinery, rather than the difficult search after the truth and a healthy doubt of one’s own omniscience. Oh, yes, there are plenty of blood-curdling possibilities in the future, frightening enough to keep sleep from any honest mind.

And yet . . . many children with colds escape pneumonia. The human race has survived many close squeaks. Just as it is probably sensible not to expect the millennium as a result of widespread long-continued mass instruction, so it is probably just as well not to fear that its only result will be the integral triumph of mediocrity. If worse comes to worst, I daresay that a certain few of our descendants will be able to create lives of tolerable civilization and distinction, no matter what intellectual barbarity lies about them, just as

a few of each generation has always managed to turn that trick. Perhaps that is the best we can expect.

But perhaps not. Perhaps more widespread education really will solve some of our new difficulties, will be a help in those more complex lives suddenly wished upon simple beings who are not given time gradually and biologically to adjust their brain-cells to complexity. Perhaps it will help our children and grandchildren to cope with that second hardship, the disconcerting appearance in lives unprepared for it, of the priceless perilous treasure of leisure time. In spite of our sensation of hurrying there is now vastly more leisure time than any other generation ever had. Not only are there fewer hours spent in work, but most work is much less physically exhausting and much less interesting. Hence less time is taken in resting from the effects of it, and in thinking about it afterwards. Millions of human lives and human minds have new blank emptinesses which only a few in the race ever encountered before. This is certainly one of the forces which drives people to all this new reaching out after more education. But it also drives them to reach out after more excitement, more sports, more entertainments, more material possessions, more noise of any sort to fill the place in their lives formerly occupied by long hours of toil. The rising tide of suicide would seem to indicate that they are as yet not wholly successful.

That same rising tide may indicate another lack in our modern life, the absence of any generally recog-

nized motive for living. We may be living through the painful moment caused by a gap between the disappearance of an old reason for existence, and the appearance of a new one. More bitterly than food, or shelter or love or occupation, human beings need a goal, a compelling reason for going on. The more time they have to think the more drastic is this need, the more horrifying that dead absence of a purpose in life which is really the absence of religion, of faith. It is possible that we are now (and have been for a half-century or more) seeing the emergence of a new faith, a new belief . . . namely that there are in humanity glorious and beautiful qualities which it is the duty of every man to protect and cherish, both in himself and in others, qualities splendid enough to make their protection worth any man's devotion.

This may be the focus towards which all our shapeless mass education is yearning. This may be the hope around which our civilization is slowly beginning to order its gigantic forces now lying lamentably at loose ends. The harmonious development of mankind may be the rallying-cry which will bring together in purposeful array the scattered forces of the race. As so often happens, the new faith may turn out to be only a new aspect of the older ones. The passionate desire to glorify God which built the cathedrals may rise again to magnificent achievements in a passionate desire to love and serve those qualities in human beings which most make them seem like the children of God.

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(Not an Exhaustive List)

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